

diabetes

If you have diabetes, you can lead a healthy, active life. You can also have a healthy pregnancy and healthy baby if you get your blood sugar under control before you become pregnant.

Your health is at risk if you have diabetes and get pregnant unless you carefully manage your blood sugar levels. Also there is a much higher chance that your baby will have a major birth defect or other serious health problems if your sugar levels are too high.

Diabetes is very common. Many women have it and don't know it. Although there are often no early symptoms, watch for these signs:

- Increased thirst and hunger
- Frequent urination
- Feeling weak, tired and irritable
- Feeling sick to your stomach, vomiting
- Having cuts and bruises that take a long time to heal
- Frequent infections of the skin, gums, vagina or bladder
- Blurry vision
- Tingling or numbness in your hands or feet.

Your chances of having diabetes are higher if:

- You are overweight
- You don't exercise regularly
- You are related to someone with diabetes
- You are African-American, Latina, Native-American, Asian- American or Asian-Indian
- You had problems with sugar levels during pregnancy.

If you have diabetes, work closely with your doctor and a dietitian or certified diabetes educator. Develop a plan to balance eating, which raises blood sugar levels, with exercise, which lowers blood sugar levels. Maintain a healthy weight. Take medicine if your doctor prescribes it.

keep in mind...

- If you have diabetes and you could become pregnant:
 - Talk with your doctor or other health care professional about the best birth control. It's important not to get pregnant until your blood sugar is under control.
- If you have diabetes and you want to get pregnant:
 - Visit your doctor for a pre-pregnancy check-up at least three months before you hope to get pregnant. You may have special needs early in and throughout pregnancy.
 - Talk to your provider about the best medication for you to take.
 - See your doctor before you become pregnant again if you had gestational diabetes when you were pregnant before.

You may be surprised to learn that more than 50 percent of all pregnancies in the United States are not planned. It may also be news that many birth defects and other newborn health problems occur in the first few weeks after conception—when you may not even know you're pregnant.

A baby's health is strongly linked to the mother's health before pregnancy. That's another important reason for you to stay healthy. Whether or not you're planning to get pregnant, it's important to follow these guidelines:

- Take a multi-vitamin with 400 micrograms of folic acid every day.
- Ask your doctor about your risk of diabetes.
- If you smoke, stop. Call toll free: 1-800-480-7848.
- Have a GYN exam annually.
- If you are being hurt by a partner or someone else, call a local shelter or crisis hot line. Also tell a health care worker you trust. Call toll free: 1-800-996-6228.
- Eat a variety of whole grains, fruits and vegetables every day and lower your intake of fat.
- Know your family history. To find genetic services and information visit www.migeneticsconnection.org. Call toll free: 1-866-852-1247.