

Preconceptional Health Strategies – *At a Glance*

Improving Outcomes for Mother and Baby!!

Why focus on preconceptional health?

Preconceptional health is a woman's health before becoming pregnant. The importance of optimal health for women of childbearing age *prior* to conception, and the role preconceptional health plays in the prevention of prematurity, low birthweight, and birth defects cannot be overemphasized.

What should every woman of childbearing age do?

- ♥ **Consume** 400 micrograms of folic acid **daily**
- ♥ **Know** her family history of birth defects, premature birth, learning disabilities, and chronic illness and share that family history with her health care provider
- ♥ **Have** a check-up from a health care provider prior to a first conception and between pregnancies (interconception care)
- ♥ **Ensure** that after giving birth, at least 18 months pass before conceiving another pregnancy (interpregnancy interval)
- ♥ **Seek** reproductive genetic counseling, if appropriate
- ♥ **Manage** chronic maternal illnesses such as asthma, depression, diabetes, hypertension, hypothyroidism, inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), kidney disease, lupus, obesity, phenylketonuria (PKU), and seizure disorders
- ♥ **Make** healthy lifestyle choices with regard to diet and exercise
- ♥ **Ensure** oral health by having regularly scheduled dental care
- ♥ **Ensure** that immunizations are up-to-date
- ♥ **Ensure** that medications (both prescription and over-the-counter), home remedies and herbal supplements are safe at the time of conception and during early pregnancy
- ♥ **Ensure** protection against domestic violence
- ♥ **Consider** her emotional and financial 'readiness' for pregnancy and parenthood
- ♥ **Avoid** exposure to alcohol, nicotine and recreational drugs
- ♥ **Avoid** exposure to infection
- ♥ **Avoid** harmful occupational and environmental exposures
- ♥ **Avoid** hot tubs and saunas
- ♥ **Avoid** intake of shark, swordfish, king mackerel or tilefish and limiting intake of tuna
- ♥ **Avoid** undercooked meat and exposure to used cat litter

Where can more information be found?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is an excellent source of information on preconceptional health. Please visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/preconception/. CDC also offers a pregnancy-planning educational program available at www.cdc.gov/nncbddd/pregnancy/

Please visit the March of Dimes website at www.marchofdimes.com for a wealth of information and resources on preconceptional health and the prevention of premature birth.

Please contact the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) Birth Defects Program at (866) 852—1247, or e-mail BDRFollowup@michigan.gov to request a free pamphlet, "*Preventing Birth Defects—Important Information for Michigan Families*" or visit www.migeneticsconnection.org and click on "Birth Defects & Folic Acid".