

# Taking Care of Me

*The Next Step for Mom*

Second Edition

Health Warnings for Women

Diet and Exercise

The Daily Dose



Good Advice  
Break the Silence





Moms are known to put their families first. But you shouldn't give up on taking care of yourself.

**Taking Care of Me** offers ways to reconnect with your physical and emotional feelings. It provides ideas on how you can feel happier and be healthier. Pick one idea to start and give it a try. Don't forget to share what you learn with family and friends.

Giving birth to a child changes most women forever. Maybe you are a first-time mom, you might have just had another baby or perhaps your family was complete a few years ago. Whatever your situation, you have many choices to make and so much to take care of, especially yourself.



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# Are you seeing **BLUE?**

## 5 TIPS TO MAKE THE BABY BLUES LOOK A LITTLE MORE ROSY

1. Don't try to be "Super Mom." Take time to care for yourself.
2. Rest and sleep when your baby sleeps.
3. Talk to other moms about their experiences and what helped them.
4. Ask friends and family to help with chores and taking care of the baby.
5. Practice ways to reduce stress. For some stress-busting tips, see page 2.

We're not talking about the color of your baby's blanket or your favorite sports team. We're talking about the "baby blues." It's normal to feel overwhelmed or confused after you have a baby. Almost half of new mothers feel "blue" after giving birth. This happens because your body and your life are going through a lot of changes. Your hormones are changing. You're probably not getting much sleep. You may be worried that you won't do a good job taking care of your baby. The "baby blues" are normal and usually only last a little while. There are things you can do to help you stop seeing blue.

### When are these feelings more serious?

Feeling down is normal in the first few weeks after your baby is born. But if these feelings don't go away after 3 to 4 weeks, you might have a more serious condition called postpartum depression. You need to ask for help — immediately. Postpartum depression is extended periods of feeling very sad, hopeless or depressed after childbirth. Some signs are excessive talking, worrying, crying, extreme change in appetite, inability to sleep or care for your baby.

## Is this depression?

Do you have any of the signs of postpartum depression? If you answer yes to any of these questions, or have been feeling sad a lot, it is time to get help. Talk to your healthcare provider, go to the emergency room or call 911 to get help right away.

Do you ...	Yes	No
feel restless or irritable?		
feel sad or hopeless?		
cry a lot?		
have little motivation?		
eat too much or not enough?		
feel worthless or guilty?		
have trouble sleeping?		
worry about your baby a lot?		
have headaches, chest pains, or a racing heart?		
have no interest in being around friends and family?		
feel like hurting yourself or your baby?		

### Break the silence

Some women don't get help for their depression because they are embarrassed or feel guilty. They may be ashamed of feeling bad at a time when they are supposed to be happy. But you shouldn't suffer in silence. Postpartum depression happens to all kinds of women. If you're feeling depressed, talk to your health care provider right away.





Stress is a normal part of life. At times, stress can be helpful. It can make you more alert and ready to face life's challenges. Even happy events, like having a baby can be stressful. Sometimes, your life may have too much stress which can cause health problems and make you feel sad or irritable.

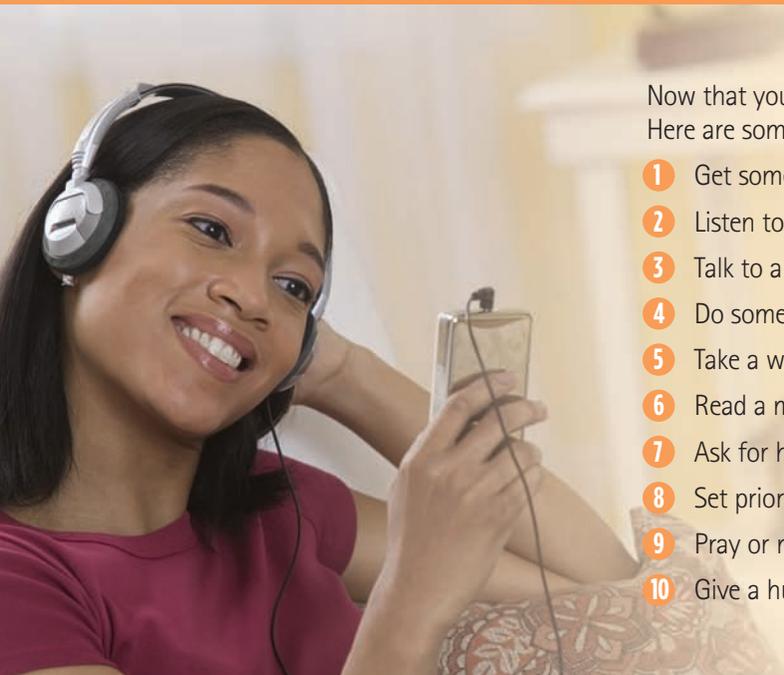
# Feeling stressed?

Stress can affect everyone differently. Often, you know when you are stressed. At other times, you might not recognize the signs of stress right away. Here are some ways people's bodies tell them they are stressed.

Check the things that happen to you. You can add your own ideas too.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Back pain             | <input type="checkbox"/> Indigestion or gas pains            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grinding your teeth   | <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of appetite or eating too much |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Headaches             | <input type="checkbox"/> Upset stomach                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hard time sleeping    | <input type="checkbox"/> Pounding heart                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to concentrate | <input type="checkbox"/> Muscle tension                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling grouchy       | <input type="checkbox"/> Ringing in the ears                 |

Other signs: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Now that you can recognize when you're feeling stressed, what can you do about it? Here are some healthy ideas for controlling your stress. Which ones work for you?

- 1 Get some exercise – even a quick walk will help.
- 2 Listen to your favorite music – go ahead, sing along.
- 3 Talk to a friend, or lots of friends.
- 4 Do something that makes you laugh – tell a joke, watch a funny movie.
- 5 Take a warm bath.
- 6 Read a magazine.
- 7 Ask for help from a trusted friend or family member.
- 8 Set priorities – only concentrate on doing the things that are most important.
- 9 Pray or meditate.
- 10 Give a hug and get a hug in return.

Smoking, drinking, taking medicines or drugs to deal with stress gives you a short-term sense of relief, but can cause long-term health problems. If you do any of these to get rid of stress, call the **NC Family Health Resource Line at 1-800-367-2229** for help on how to stop.



# Your Mouth Says a Lot

Some say laughter is the best medicine. And that's pretty good advice. Laughing and smiling can help reduce stress and make you feel good. It's also good advice to listen to what your mouth is telling you. If your gums are swollen, tender or bleeding, you may have periodontal (gum) disease. This is a serious disease that if left untreated can lead to tooth loss and pain. Hormone changes, stress, diet and medicines can cause gum problems. Women who have gum disease during pregnancy are seven times more likely to have a baby that is born too early or too small.

## MULTIVITAMINS: TAKE A DAILY DOSE

All women should take a multivitamin with 400 micrograms of folic acid every day. Folic acid can improve your health and help reduce the risk of some types of cancer and heart disease. Make sure you take a multivitamin with folic acid for at least one month before becoming pregnant. Folic acid may prevent certain birth defects. During pregnancy most women take special "prenatal" vitamins. These have higher amounts of folic acid, calcium and iron that are needed during pregnancy. After the baby comes, you can switch back to your regular multivitamin. If you have trouble swallowing your vitamin, try chewables. By the way, multivitamins don't cause weight gain. And generics are just as good as brand names.

## Tips for a healthy mouth

- Brush your teeth for at least 2 minutes, twice a day, with fluoride toothpaste.
- Use a toothbrush with soft bristles. Replace it every 3 or 4 months.
- Don't smoke or chew tobacco. Smoking and chewing tobacco can cause gum problems and mouth cancer.
- Use dental floss every day to get rid of the food that gets stuck between your teeth.
- See your dentist every 6 months for a cleaning to remove plaque (tartar) buildup and to check for any problems.
- Reduce your stress.
- Control your diabetes.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Tell your dentist if you are pregnant and what medicines you take.





# What's in your future?

Do you dream of a big family with lots of children? Or is one or two enough? Even if you just had a baby, it's important to start thinking about your plans for the future.

## MAKE YOUR PLANS

Almost half of all pregnancies are unplanned. An unplanned pregnancy can cause a lot of stress. Stress may hurt the health of you and your baby. If you wait at least a year and a half between having a baby and getting pregnant again, you have a better chance of having a healthy baby.

Think about some important questions.

How many children do you want to have? \_\_\_\_\_

How far apart do you want their ages to be? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you prevent an unplanned pregnancy?  
\_\_\_\_\_

(For information about how to keep from getting pregnant, see the chart below.)

## CHOOSE THE METHOD THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

It's no secret; if you have sex, you can get pregnant. Whether you just had a baby, have not had a period since your baby was born, or are breastfeeding, you can still get pregnant.

There are many kinds of birth control. Each kind has advantages and disadvantages. Look at the chart below to decide what might be right for you. Then talk to your doctor. Don't be afraid to ask lots of questions. Remember to ask how each method works and how to use it correctly.



Birth Control Method	How it Works	Advantages	Disadvantages
Abstinence (not having sex)	No semen enters the vagina.	It's free. Is the only way to be sure not to get pregnant. Prevents sexually transmitted infections (STIs).	May not be realistic if you have a regular partner.
The pill, patch, Nuva Ring and Depo Provera	Stops your ovaries from releasing eggs. You must get them from your doctor.	Very effective <b>if used correctly</b> .	Does not prevent STIs.
Intrauterine Device (IUD)	Your doctor puts it in the uterus to stop sperm from joining with the egg. You must get it from your doctor.	Very effective. No need to remember to use it since it's always in place.	Does not prevent STIs.
Condoms	"Rubber" placed over the penis or in the vagina to block egg and sperm from mixing.	Prevents STIs <b>if used correctly</b> . Can get at the store. Very effective <b>if used correctly</b> .	Some people don't like how they feel.
Diaphragm	A small cup covers the opening of the uterus to stop sperm from entering. Use with spermicidal foams and creams. Must be fitted by a doctor.	Effective <b>if used correctly</b> .	Does not prevent STIs.
Spermicidal Foams and Creams	Put it in your vagina right before sex to kill sperm.	Can get at the store.	Not very effective at preventing pregnancy. Does not prevent STIs.
Sterilization	A medical procedure (surgical or non-surgical) permanently stops sperm from reaching eggs.	Extremely effective in preventing pregnancy.	Does not prevent STIs.

Remember that most local health departments have free or low-cost birth control options.

## TRACKING YOUR CYCLE

From about age 11 to 50, a woman menstruates (gets her period) once a month. During menstruation, blood, an egg and the lining of her uterus are released. Every woman's monthly period is different. Some women have light periods, and some have heavy ones. Some women's periods last just a few days, and some women's last a week. Doctors use the dates of your period to help determine if you are pregnant and when you became pregnant. You can still have your period and be pregnant. You can also miss or be late with your period and not be pregnant.

Keeping track of your monthly period is a good way to understand your body. It will also help you know what is normal for you. All you need is a calendar. Each month, mark the day that your period starts. Then mark the day it ends. Write down anything that you notice about your period (for example, if your flow was heavy or light). After a few months of keeping track, look back at your calendar. How long does your period usually last? How many days between periods? Do you notice anything else?



# Getting Personal

## AFTER THE BABY

The first period after the birth of a baby is different for every woman. You may have bleeding off and on for the first six weeks as your body starts to recover. If you are breastfeeding, your period might not come back for many months. If you are not breastfeeding, your period will probably come back four to eight weeks after your baby is born. Remember, even if your period hasn't come back yet, you can still get pregnant. Use birth control to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. If you miss a period, see your doctor!

## THE WET SPOT

It's normal to have some wetness or "discharge" from your vagina. The amount is different for each woman. The amount even changes during each woman's monthly cycle. Knowing what is normal for you can help you notice when there is a problem. Call your healthcare provider if your discharge causes itching, swelling, burning, smells bad or is not clear in color. This could mean that you have a vaginal infection. To learn more about vaginal infections, turn to page 6.

## THE TRUTH ABOUT DOUCHING

Some women think they must douche to get rid of their discharge or to feel fresh. But normal bathing in a tub or shower is enough to keep your vagina clean.

**Q:** If it makes me feel clean, what's wrong with douching?

**A:** Your vagina has "good bacteria" that helps you fight against "bad bacteria" (disease and infection). Douching washes away good bacteria. This allows the bad bacteria to grow. Douching is also linked to vaginal infections. Douche only if your doctor tells you to.

**Q:** What about using sprays, wipes, powders or other products to get that extra-clean feeling?

**A:** Some products, especially scented ones, can lead to problems. Wear panties with a cotton lining and comfortable (not tight) clothes. Keep clean and dry. Make sure you talk with your healthcare provider about any concerns or changes.



Between Us



**PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY**  
STIs can cause serious health risks and problems for women.

## COULD IT BE AN STI?

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are passed through sexual or "close" contact with an infected person. This means you can get an STI in your mouth, vagina or genital area (the area near your vagina) – even without having vaginal sex.

### Symptoms

Some infected women may not have symptoms. Or symptoms may show up weeks or months after sex or close contact. If you have any of the symptoms listed below, see your healthcare provider as soon as possible.

### Prevention and Treatment

With or without symptoms, STIs don't get better if they are not treated. Not having sex or close contact with infected people is the

best way to prevent an STI. Sometimes people do not know or do not tell if they are infected, so always use a condom correctly. Delayed treatment could cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) which could make it hard for you to get pregnant or cause other serious health complications.

If you think you have an STI and are breastfeeding, let your healthcare provider know. Some infections and the medicines used to treat them can be passed to your baby through breast milk.

# STIs: Know the Facts

Sexually Transmitted Infection	Vaginal Discharge	This Could Cause
<b>Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)</b>	White, gray or thin with a smell.	Pain or burning when peeing. Itching around the vagina.
<b>Candida</b> (yeast infection)	Cottage cheese-looking discharge.	Pain when peeing or having sex. Itching and burning of the vagina.
<b>Chlamydia</b>	Heavy vaginal discharge. Bleeding between periods.	Pain or burning when peeing. Pain during sex. Problems getting pregnant.
<b>Genital Herpes</b>	May have more "normal" discharge than usual.	Flu-like feelings. Painful sores. Burning, itching or swelling of the vagina or areas close by.
<b>Genital Warts</b> (also called Human Papillomavirus or HPV)	May have more "normal" discharge than usual.	Visible warts in the vagina and the areas close by, including the thighs.
<b>Gonorrhea</b> ("The Clap")	Yellow, sometimes bloody discharge. Bleeding between periods.	Pain during sex. Pain or burning when peeing. Problems getting pregnant.
<b>Hepatitis B (HBV)</b>	None. Pee may be dark. Pale bowel movements.	Headaches and muscle aches, stomach pain. Loss of appetite. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.
<b>HIV – GET TESTED!</b>	May not have symptoms for 10 years or more.	HIV causes AIDS.
<b>Syphilis</b>	May have more "normal" discharge than usual.	Muscle aches, fever, sore throat, headaches and swollen glands. Painless sores. Skin rashes, patchy hair loss and weight loss. Problems getting pregnant.
<b>Trichomoniasis</b> ("Trich")	Yellow, green or gray discharge, with a strong odor.	Pain during sex and when peeing. Itching around the vagina and nearby areas.
<b>Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)</b>	None. Pee may be cloudy or reddish.	Pain or burning when peeing. Feeling the urge to pee, but only passing small amounts.

# Go Natural

*...It's Best for You  
and Your Baby*

While you were pregnant, you ate healthy foods and followed your doctor's advice. Now that your baby is here, continue giving the right start — breastfeed. Breast milk requires no warming, and you can save money by not buying artificial milk and bottles. Your milk is the perfect recipe with just the right ingredients to satisfy your baby for the first 6 months. It tastes great, is easy to digest and helps your baby's brain grow. As your baby continues to grow and develop, add solid foods and continue breastfeeding until your baby is **at least 1 year old**.

## Check it out...

Moms who do not breastfeed may have a higher risk of:

- Type 2 (adult) diabetes, especially if they had gestational diabetes.
- postpartum depression.
- breast and ovarian cancer.

Nursing a baby is a loving, caring, enjoyable experience. It helps you relax and feel closer to your baby. Moms feel proud that their babies grow as a result of something only they can do! Babies who do not get mother's milk have more allergies, earaches, obesity and diabetes later in life.

Keep in mind that a breast pump can help you when you go back to work. The WIC Program is a great place to get more information on breastfeeding and breast pumps.



## Breast Care

Because breast cancer can affect any woman, take a few minutes to check your breasts by completing a breast self-exam every month. Note changes in the way your breasts look and feel. Check your breasts even if you are breastfeeding. Breast cancer is often detected by having a mammogram (an x-ray that detects cancer). Talk to your family; learn about your health history. If cancer is a part of your health history, tell your healthcare provider and ask when and how often you should have a mammogram. Otherwise, it is recommended that women age 40 or older have a mammogram once a year.

### HOW TO EXAMINE YOUR BREASTS

**CHECK!** Lie down. Place your left arm behind your head. With your right hand, feel the left breast all around using the three patterns shown at right. Then switch hands. Put your right arm behind your head. Check your right breast. Check under your arms, too.

**LOOK!** Before you get dressed, stand in front of a mirror. Look at your breasts. Do you see changes when you put your hands:

- down to your side?
- on your hips?
- in the air?

How do your breasts look when you bend over with your hands on your hips? Look closely.

- Do you see lumps or dimples?
- Are there clear drops or blood coming from your nipples?
- Do you feel pain or tender spots?

If you answer "yes" to any of these, make an appointment with your healthcare provider.



# Ready? Set?

## Aim for a Healthy

### Sometimes our bodies need a little reshaping, especially after having a baby.

If you are trying to lose some of that extra baby-weight, make sure your healthcare provider knows before you get started. Remember, it took time to put on those extra pounds. It will take time to lose them. If you are breastfeeding, keep in mind that your baby eats what you eat. Choose foods that help your baby grow strong.

When you start to lose weight, do it slowly. Aim for about a pound a week. Before you get pregnant again, eat foods that strengthen your body and help you have a healthy pregnancy.

### Easy ways to get started

1. Cut out just one snack each day.
2. Drink water or low-calorie drinks.
3. Show off your family; go for a walk every day.

### Easy ways to keep it up

1. Find an exercise friend.
2. Work your way up to 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week.
3. Use the Daily Log on the back page to keep track of your progress.

### Write down your plan here

*Starting today, I will cut back on eating:*

---

---

---

*And tomorrow, I will call \_\_\_\_\_  
to go for a walk.*

### Mix it up

If your diet needs a change and you don't know how to start, pick one of these easy tips. Then add another in a few days. Keep with it. If you slip up one day, get back on track. By the end of the month, you'll have more energy and will be on your way to reducing your risk of heart disease, diabetes and obesity.

- Eat at the table. Don't drive, watch TV or talk on the phone while you eat.
- Don't skip meals; you may eat too much at your next meal.
- Eat mini-meals when you are hungry.
- Choose small or regular sized portions, not extra-large sizes.
- Replace whole milk products with light or low-fat products.
- Keep healthy snacks at hand. You tend to eat what you can reach.
- Skip fried foods. Eat grilled, baked or steamed ones.
- Pick whole-grain products instead of white bread, pasta and rice.
- Cut the junk food. Grab some fruit instead.

For the price of a soda from a vending machine you could buy a healthy snack like an apple, banana, orange or low-fat yogurt.

# Weight



## Body Mass Index (BMI)

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a number calculated from a person's weight and height. BMI is an easy way to estimate body fatness for most people. It is used to screen for weight categories (underweight, overweight and obese) that may lead to health problems.

Use this table to calculate your BMI. Find your height in the far left column. Then find your weight in the top row. Where your height and weight meet is your Body Mass Index score.

WEIGHT IN POUNDS															
ht	100	110	120	130	140	150	160	170	180	190	200	210	220	230	240
5'0"	20	21	23	25	27	29	31	33	35	37	39				
5'1"	19	21	23	25	27	28	30	32	34	36	38	40			
5'2"	18	20	22	24	26	27	29	31	33	35	37	38	40		
5'3"	18	19	21	23	25	27	28	30	32	34	36	37	39		
5'4"		19	21	22	24	26	28	29	31	33	34	36	38	40	
5'5"		18	20	22	23	25	27	28	30	32	33	35	37	38	40
5'6"		18	19	21	23	24	26	27	29	31	32	34	36	37	39
5'7"			19	20	22	24	25	27	28	30	31	33	35	36	38
5'8"			18	20	21	23	24	26	27	29	30	32	34	35	37
5'9"			18	19	21	22	24	25	27	28	30	31	33	34	36
5'10"			17	19	20	22	23	24	26	27	29	30	32	33	35

Example, if you are 5 feet 4 inches and weigh 140 pounds, you are in the green zone and have a healthy weight.

### If your BMI is 18 or less:

You are underweight for your height. You may get sick more often and be at high risk for weak bones (osteoporosis). Ask your healthcare provider if you need to gain weight and what to eat. Be active every day.

### If your BMI is between 19 and 24:

Congratulations. Your weight is in the normal range. Staying in this range reduces your risk of diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure. To keep your healthy weight, eat lots of veggies, fruits and whole grains. Be active 30 to 60 minutes a day.

### If your BMI is between 25 and 29:

You are in the overweight category. You are at higher risk for high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease. Even a small weight loss (just 10 percent of your current weight) may help lower your risks. To avoid gaining more weight, eat fewer processed and fast foods. Eat more veggies, fruits and whole grains. Aim for 30 minutes of activity a day.

### If your BMI is over 30:

You are in the obese category. You are at risk for high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. The higher your BMI, the higher your risk for poor health. Eat more veggies, fruits and whole grains. Talk to your healthcare provider about the best way for you to lose weight.

Did you know that mothers who smoke when they are pregnant have babies who are three times more likely to die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)?

# Breathe Easy



Have you noticed that more and more public places are banning smoking? Restaurants, hospitals, even outdoor sports arenas have banned smoking. The signs are all around us. Smoking and secondhand smoke are dangerous and cause many health risks, such as lung cancer and heart disease. Smoking can lower your chances of getting pregnant. And if you are pregnant, just imagine how smoking can affect your unborn baby.

Mothers who smoke during pregnancy are at risk of:

- having a baby born too small.
- having a baby born prematurely (too early).

Premature and low-birthweight babies can have life-long disabilities like mental retardation and learning problems. Some babies who are born too early struggle to live. Smoking cigarettes and secondhand smoke are harmful to you, your baby and your family. So why risk your health and the health of your family?

## Why get sick from someone else's smoke?

Do you find it hard to tell friends and relatives not to smoke around you and your family? Don't be afraid or embarrassed to ask someone not to smoke around you. Secondhand smoke can cause health problems like lung cancer and asthma. Breathing secondhand smoke can make it easier to get sick with colds, sore throats, earaches and allergies. Even though you are not the one smoking, the chemicals in the smoke can be just as bad to breathe.

## Some Tips to Avoid Secondhand Smoke

- **Don't allow smoking in your home.** The next time relatives or friends light up around you, let them know that smoking is off limits.
- **Don't allow smoking in your car.** If smokers are riding with you, stop at a rest area or other safe location for them to get out of the car and smoke.
- **Go to restaurants and stores that have a no smoking policy.**



## SPIT IT OUT... TOBACCO, THAT IS

There is no safe form of tobacco. Using spit tobacco even for a short period of time can cause cracked lips, bleeding gums, white spots and painful sores on the inside of your mouth. Mouth sores and gums can get infected. These infections can cause your baby to be born too early and too small to be healthy.

If you chew tobacco or use snuff and are breastfeeding, you and your baby get twice the nicotine found in cigarettes.

## DRINKING ALCOHOL CAN PUT WOMEN AT RISK OF DEVELOPING:

- breast cancer
- brain damage and memory loss
- sexually transmitted infections
- depression/anxiety
- heart disease

# How Much Alcohol is Too Much?

"Oh, just one little drink won't hurt." One little drink can turn into a habit of drinking. Alcohol, like other drugs, affects the way your mind and body work. Women's bodies are much more sensitive to the affects of alcohol and more easily damaged by alcohol than men's. Pregnant women who drink may put their unborn babies at risk of fetal alcohol syndrome (the number one cause of preventable mental retardation). If you drink and are of childbearing age, see your healthcare provider about the best birth control for you. Planning when to become pregnant will allow you time to stop drinking. Be responsible, careful and informed about drinking.

## Breastfeeding ... If you smoke, drink or do drugs ... Your baby does too!

If you are breastfeeding, congratulations! You are giving your baby a great start and the best nutrition there is. Here are some important things to know while breastfeeding:

- Most over-the-counter and prescription medicines are safe. Always let your healthcare provider know about any medicines you are taking (even birth control pills).
- Choose caffeine-free drinks whenever possible.
- Avoid alcohol. The alcohol you drink goes into your milk and to your baby.
- Do not smoke. Chemicals from cigarettes, including the drug nicotine, pass through your breast milk to your baby. It is best to quit smoking, 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669). If you are having trouble quitting, talk to your doctor about options that will allow you to continue breastfeeding.
- Never use street drugs. Even small amounts of drugs in your breast milk can harm your baby. If you use street drugs and breastfeed, get help. Stop breastfeeding until you quit using drugs completely.



# Plan Your Doctor's Visits and Make Them Count

Your healthcare provider can be your friend. Find one you are comfortable with and is easy to talk to. Doctors are busy, but they will take time to answer your questions and talk about your concerns.

**1** When making your appointments, be clear about the reason(s) for your visit.

**2** Before you go to your appointment, talk to your family about your health history. Ask about health and medical problems that are in your family, like diabetes, high blood pressure and cancer. Your doctor needs to know what risks may affect you.

**3** Let your doctor know if you are pregnant, nursing or have any kind of chronic illness.

**4** Tell your doctor what prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines, contraceptives, herbs and vitamins you take and if you are allergic to any medicines.

**5** If your doctor prescribes a medicine, make sure you understand why you need it and how to take it. Ask for the generic brand to get the lower cost.

**6** Keep a record of the preventive screenings and tests that you have each year. Record the dates of your menstrual cycle. Your healthcare provider needs to know when to schedule tests and screenings.

**7** Write down a list of questions to ask. Record the answers to look back at later.

## ARE YOU AT RISK?

Do you have high blood pressure or diabetes? Are you overweight or over age 35? If you answered "yes" to any of these, you could put your next pregnancy in danger. See your doctor before getting pregnant again.

Keep your doctor's phone number, address and hours of operation handy at home and work. Ask ahead about what to do in case of an emergency.

Develop a relationship with your healthcare providers. They will decide when you need your preventive screenings and immunizations.

## 8 Great Checkups!

Use this chart as a reminder to see your healthcare provider.

Schedule Your	Date Completed	Write down the results and what your healthcare provider said
<b>1</b> Physical Exam		
<b>2</b> Blood Pressure Check		
<b>3</b> Cholesterol Test		
<b>4</b> Diabetes (Blood Sugar) Test		
<b>5</b> Dental Exam and Cleaning		
<b>6</b> Pap Test and Pelvic Exam		
<b>7</b> HIV/AIDS and Other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) Tests		
<b>8</b> Mammogram (x-ray of breast)		



# Immunizations ... Are You on Track?



## Your Vaccination Record

A vaccination record helps you remember which shots you've had and when. Your healthcare provider will give you a form to keep track of your shots and your children's shots. Keep the records in a safe place where you can find them. An up-to-date immunization record is needed for most day cares and schools. You may need to show an immunization record for some jobs.

### YOUR BEST SHOT AT BEING HEALTHY

Let's be honest. No one likes getting shots. But shots (also called vaccinations or immunizations) are one of the most important ways to protect against many serious illnesses.

Vaccinations protect against illnesses like measles, mumps, polio, whooping cough and chicken pox. These illnesses are serious for everyone but can be even worse for young children. That's why vaccinations start right after babies are born. Make sure your baby has regular checkups. That will help you make sure your baby gets his or her shots on the right schedule.

### NOT JUST FOR KIDS

Every year, adults get sick or die from illnesses that could have been prevented with a vaccination. That's why adults and teens need shots, too. Teenagers need shots before entering certain grades. Colleges require some immunizations too. Adults also need booster shots for tetanus as well as immunizations to protect against pneumonia, flu and other health problems. But, if you are pregnant or want to become pregnant, tell your healthcare provider before getting any shots. Pregnant women should not get certain immunizations.

### HOW TO DETECT CERVICAL CANCER EARLY

You've already learned that Pap tests (also called Pap smears) are an important checkup for women. Women should get a Pap test every year, starting at age 18 or when they become sexually active. Pap tests check for cervical cancer. The cervix is the opening to the uterus (where a baby grows while you are pregnant). When cancer cells grow on the cervix, this is called cervical cancer.

Sometimes there are no symptoms of cervical cancer until the cancer is far along. Pap tests catch cervical cancer early, when it's most treatable. That's why it's important to get a Pap test every year. It's the only way to catch cervical cancer early.

#### Did you know?

- Pap tests are easy and quick.
- Pap tests don't hurt.
- Pap tests reduce your risk of dying of cervical cancer.
- You can get a Pap test even if you don't have health insurance. Many clinics and health departments will do the test for free or little cost.

Most cervical cancers are caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV). There is a new vaccine to prevent the virus in girls and young women. Talk to your doctor about the HPV vaccine, or call 1-800-4-CANCER to get more information.



# 4 Easy Ways to Take Care of Yourself

Taking care of yourself can be easy. Really! Start off with these **4 simple steps** today. Then do them again tomorrow and the day after. By the end of the week, you'll say "that was easy." Keep going all month long. Yes, that's four weeks from now, but it's only one day at a time.

- 1** Go for a walk.
- 2** Drink more water.
- 3** Take your multivitamin.
- 4** Add a fruit or vegetable to each meal.

Now that's not so hard to do, is it? Try it!

## HAVE SOME FREE FUN!

There are plenty of ways to be more active that don't cost money.

- Play tag with your kids.
- Use the stairs, not the elevator.
- Dance while making dinner.
- Learn how to play hop-scotch or double-jump.
- Park far away from the door where you work.
- Play ball.
- Walk for half of your lunch time.

## Ready? Set? Let's Go!

Use this chart to keep track of how well you're doing for the next month.

 Put a ✓ in the box every time you eat a fruit or vegetable. Try to get 5-9 each day.

 Put an X in the box when you take your daily vitamin.

 Write in the number of minutes you exercise each day. Try to get at least 30 minutes most days.

 Record the number of glasses of water, milk or juice that you drink each day. Try to drink at least six 8-ounce glasses each day.

	Week 1					Week 2			
									
Monday					Monday				
Tuesday					Tuesday				
Wednesday					Wednesday				
Thursday					Thursday				
Friday					Friday				
Saturday					Saturday				
Sunday					Sunday				

	Week 3					Week 4			
									
Monday					Monday				
Tuesday					Tuesday				
Wednesday					Wednesday				
Thursday					Thursday				
Friday					Friday				
Saturday					Saturday				
Sunday					Sunday				

