

# Reproductive Life Plan

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE GETTING PREGNANT

If you are preparing to start a family, you should think about your emotional and physical health. This is also a time to examine your activities and behaviors. For example, you should know what prescription drugs you are taking and make sure they are safe if you are considering getting pregnant. To help ensure a healthy pregnancy you should also look at eliminating certain behaviors such as smoking and consuming alcohol.

Your partner should examine personal habits as well. For example, if your partner smokes, ask them to quit now so your home will be smoke-free before the baby is born.

A “Reproductive Life Plan”, created before you conceive, will help you make sure you are prepared for pregnancy and your baby when the time comes.

## CREATING YOUR REPRODUCTIVE LIFE PLAN

Creating a Reproductive Life Plan will help you think about how you would like to live your life and care for your health. The plan can be started in your teen years and can be changed as you move through the different stages of your life.

A Reproductive Life Plan is a set of goals you set to decide if and when you plan to have children, and under what circumstances you would like to conceive. It also helps you set personal health goals so that you are physically and emotionally prepared for pregnancy.

Not every pregnancy is planned, so it is important that you develop healthy habits now, in case you conceive unexpectedly. Your health and lifestyle decisions will affect the development of your baby. Additionally, when you are ready to have a partner in your life, it's important that you discuss your plan with this person. You can then decide together what your plan for children will be going forward.

We are pleased to provide you with some tools to help you create your Reproductive Life Plan. Remember, this is something that you will want to review at least once a year to make sure you are still on track with your goals, and to change and create new goals as your views and life circumstances change. Let's begin!



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# Reproductive Life Plan

ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BELOW TO HELP YOU PREPARE YOUR PLAN.

Do you want to have children one day? \_\_\_\_\_

**If YES:**

- How many children would you like to have? \_\_\_\_\_
- How old would you like to be when you have your first child? \_\_\_\_\_
- How many years would you like there to be between your children? \_\_\_\_\_
- Once you are sexually active, do you have a plan to prevent pregnancy until you are ready? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is there someone you can speak with about birth control options such as your mother, another family member, your doctor or a teacher? \_\_\_\_\_
- If you get pregnant before you are ready, what will you do? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you have a family history of multiple births? \_\_\_\_\_

**If NO:**

- Once you are sexually active, do you have a plan to prevent pregnancy? \_\_\_\_\_
- If you get pregnant anyway, what will you do? \_\_\_\_\_

**Goals:** (example: I will talk to my doctor about birth control.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

## PRECONCEPTION HEALTH

Even with the use of birth control, pregnancy sometimes happens. It's important that you lead a healthy lifestyle now and in the future so that if pregnancy should occur, your baby will have a healthy start in life.

If you answer YES to any of the behavior questions below, please ask for help in quitting. Perhaps you can speak with your mother, another family member, your doctor or a teacher and get help. It's important to remember that the steps you take today will benefit you and your baby tomorrow.

- Do you smoke? \* \_\_\_\_\_
- If you are younger than 21 years of age, do you drink alcohol? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, how many glasses per week? \_\_\_\_\_
- If you are 21 years of age or older, do you binge drink? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you use recreational drugs or abuse medications? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you diet or overeat excessively? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you have multiple sexual partners? \_\_\_\_\_

\*Ready to quit tobacco? Call the New York State Smokers' Quitline at **1-866-NY-QUITS** (1-866-697-8487).

**Goals:** (example: I will speak with my doctor about how to quit smoking.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

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## HEALTHY LIFESTYLE HABITS

Adopt the habits below to improve your health and the health of your unborn baby. Congratulate yourself for the habits you have already adopted and set goals to incorporate others into your lifestyle.

- Get six to eight hours of sleep each night.
- Eat plenty of fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains daily.
- Decrease the intake of fats and refined sugars in your diet.
- Take a daily multivitamin that contains folic acid. Folic acid helps to prevent certain birth defects when taken before and during pregnancy.
- Visit your doctor and dentist for regular checkups.
- If you are sexually active, get tested for HIV/AIDS and other STI's (sexually transmitted infections).
- Make sure any health problems are under control. Work with your doctor to develop a plan of care to improve your health. Some medical conditions that can negatively affect pregnancy are asthma, diabetes, high blood pressure, thyroid conditions, mental illness (including depression), heart defects and infections.

**Goals:** (example: I will call today to schedule a visit with my dentist.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

## IMPORTANT VACCINATIONS

During childhood, your doctor gave you vaccines to help protect you from various diseases. These immunizations will continue to protect you and can protect your baby through the first few months of his life. Make sure that your vaccinations are up to date before you become pregnant.

During your next office visit, review your immunization record with your doctor and get any vaccines that you might need. These vaccines include:

- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)
- Inactivated Polio Virus (IPV)
- Hepatitis B
- Varicella (Chicken Pox)
- Pertussis
- Gardasil (if you are under age 26)
- Flu (during flu season which lasts from October through April)

**Goals:** (example: I will ask my doctor which vaccines I need.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

# Reproductive Life Plan

## FAMILY HISTORY

Since health problems can sometimes run in families, you should identify health problems that have happened to immediate family members (grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters) and talk to your doctor about ways you can reduce your risk of having these problems. When you know who the father of your baby will be, ask him to identify problems in his family. This will give you a full understanding of the potential risks that may affect your pregnancy. Health problems to be identified include:

- A baby born prematurely or too early.
- A baby who weighed less than 5 lb. 8 oz. at birth.
- Pre-eclampsia (high blood pressure in pregnancy) or eclampsia (seizures).
- Gestational diabetes (diabetes that starts during pregnancy).
- Two or more miscarriages.
- Infertility problems.
- Stillborn baby (baby not alive at birth).
- Baby with a heart defect.
- Depression before or after delivery.
- Asthma.
- Heart or lung disease.
- Stroke.
- Other.

**Goals:** (example: I will speak with my doctor about the fact that my sister was born prematurely.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

## EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

Your emotional health and development are essential when considering when to start or expand your family. Consider the following questions when you are developing your Reproductive Life Plan. Set goals and seek help, if needed, before you plan for your child.

- Do you often feel sad, anxious, overwhelmed or worried for longer than two weeks? \_\_\_\_\_
- What types of things make you feel that way? \_\_\_\_\_
- What types of things make you angry and how do you calm yourself? \_\_\_\_\_
- What do you do if someone says something that you don't like? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is there anyone in your life who is physically abusing you? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is there anyone in your life who often says mean or hurtful things to you? \_\_\_\_\_
- Is there anyone in your life who is forcing you to take part in sexual activities that make you feel uncomfortable? \_\_\_\_\_

If you are troubled, you should get help. Your health plan can assist you in obtaining professional and confidential counseling. For immediate access to a mental health counselor, call our Mental Health and Substance Abuse department at the number listed on the back of your health plan ID card. No referral is needed.

**Goals:** (example: I feel sad almost every day. I will call a mental health counselor.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

# Reproductive Life Plan

## DREAMS AND GOALS

Your dreams and goals play a big role in your ability to live a happy life and raise happy children. Think about your future goals. When do you see yourself starting a family? This is what your Reproductive Life Plan is all about—planning ahead to meet your goals in life and having a happy and healthy family!

- Where do you see yourself in five years? \_\_\_\_\_
- What will your life be like at that time? \_\_\_\_\_
- How much education do you want to complete? \_\_\_\_\_
- What type of work or career path do you want to pursue? \_\_\_\_\_
- Will you continue to work after you become a mother? \_\_\_\_\_
- If you want to be a stay-at-home mom, will you be able to afford to do it? \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:** It's important to have a financial plan before having children. You will need a safe place to live, money for living expenses (e.g., clothing, groceries), transportation and medical insurance.

**Goals:** (example: I want to finish college before I plan a family.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

There are many things to think about when planning your future, especially when a baby might be involved. It is important to remember that a pregnancy may occur, even if not planned, and you need to be sure that you are physically and emotionally prepared.

We hope this Reproductive Life Plan tool and the information in it about preconception health have given you something to think about and discuss with your family, spouse/life partner and doctors. Remember, this plan will change as you move through the different phases of your life, so you'll want to reevaluate your plan each year to be sure you're on target and to make any changes.

The time to take care of your health is before you get pregnant. By doing so, when you decide you are ready for a baby, your body and mind will be ready too.