

BRENNAN OB/GYN ASSOCIATES, P.C.

Obstetrics and Gynecology

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INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS PLANNING A PREGNANCY

Our ultimate goal is to help you have a normal pregnancy and to deliver a healthy baby. There are many things that you can do prior to becoming pregnant to reduce the risk of problems. Although nothing can guarantee a “perfect” baby, I would like you to consider the following recommendations:

1. Pre-existing medical problems can sometimes cause serious problems during pregnancy for both you and your baby. If you have any medical problems like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart or kidney problems you should discuss this with your obstetrician.
2. Review your own and your husband’s family medical history (grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, and first cousins) for:
 - a. Hereditary diseases: Down’s Syndrome, Spina Bifida, Cystic Fibrosis, Sickle Cell Anemia, Hemophilia, Phenylketonuria, Tay-Sachs disease, Muscular Dystrophy, and Huntington’s Chorea
 - b. Birth defects (cleft lip, cleft palate, heart defects, etc.)
 - c. Mental Retardation
 - d. Epilepsy
 - e. Cerebral Palsy
 - f. Stillbirths
 - g. Other medical problems
3. Rubella (German measles or the three day measles) is a viral infection which can cause serious birth defects if the mother develops this infection while pregnant. If you have already had Rubella or have been vaccinated, then you most likely have immunity. If you are uncertain about this, there is a simple blood test which can determine your immunity. If you are not immune, you should be vaccinated three months before becoming pregnant.
4. Toxoplasmosis is another infectious disease which can cause serious birth defects if the mother develops this during pregnancy. This disease is thought to be transmitted by house cats through the feces and rare meat. If you have a cat have someone else clean the litter box. Be sure any meat you eat is well cooked.
5. Herpes infections of the genital tract can cause serious infections in the baby at the time of birth. If you have ever had herpes discuss this with your obstetrician.

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6. Some medications can cause birth defects. You should avoid all medications after you stop using any birth control. This includes “street drugs” and over-the-counter medications. If you are taking prescription medications that must be continued, discuss this with your obstetrician.
7. Alcohol even in small amounts can cause serious birth defects including mental retardation. You should avoid all alcoholic beverages after you stop using any birth control.
8. Smoking has been shown to have harmful effects on the fetus. You should quit smoking before you become pregnant.
9. X-ray exposure has been associated with birth defects. You should avoid x-rays after you stop using birth control.
10. If you are taking birth control pills, stop them at the end of a package, and use another method of birth control such as foam or condoms until your cycles resume. This may take 4 weeks or longer.
11. Keep an accurate record of your menstrual cycles and note any irregularities.
12. A urine pregnancy test is usually positive 10-14 days after you would normally have had a period. You may do a home pregnancy test or bring a morning specimen to the office for a pregnancy test. You will be notified of the results the same day you bring in the urine specimen.
13. Age is not generally a major problem with the exception of Down’s syndrome. If you are over 35 you should discuss this with your obstetrician.
14. You may continue your normal activities during pregnancy. I would recommend that you avoid extremely strenuous activity such as competitive sports. Walking, bicycle riding, and swimming are excellent activities during pregnancy.
15. If you are overweight you may diet before becoming pregnant. You should never try to lose weight during pregnancy.
16. You should eat a well-balanced diet and get plenty of rest before, as well as, during pregnancy.
17. Vitamins are probably not necessary before pregnancy if you eat a well-balanced diet. You may take a non-prescription multi-vitamin if you wish.
18. Studies have shown that folic acid, as little as 1 milligram daily, can help your baby’s brain and spinal cord development.