

# Ready for Baby?

5 tips for getting healthy before you get pregnant

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When you're thinking about a baby, it's easy to fast-forward to the day you bring home your little one. But the first step to a healthy baby is a healthy you.

Sue Lee, MD, an OB/GYN on the medical staff at Parker Adventist Hospital, says the three months before you intend to become pregnant are a critical time. "Starting healthy habits now makes it easier when you do become pregnant," Lee says.



## Here's a checklist to put you on the path toward a healthy pregnancy.

<p>✓ <b>Schedule a preconception counseling appointment.</b> Three months before you plan to start trying to get pregnant, schedule this appointment with your doctor, says Vandna Jerath, MD, an OB/GYN who practices at Parker Hospital. During this appointment, she talks to patients about health issues such as diet and weight as well as any risks for genetic health conditions.</p>	<p>✓ <b>Start taking prenatal vitamins.</b> Folic acid (400 micrograms a day) is recommended to help prevent neural tube defects. "One important fact that most women don't realize is that they should start at least three months in advance," says Deb Tozer, MD, an OB/GYN who also practices at Parker Hospital. "Folic acid is important for development in the first trimester, which starts from the moment of conception, before the positive pregnancy test."</p>	<p>✓ <b>Work toward a healthy weight.</b> Pregnancy is not the time to start a diet. But if you're overweight, adjusting your diet before conception is a good idea. Just like you, your baby will need plenty of healthy, nutrient-rich foods. Plus, with a healthy weight comes a lower risk of pregnancy-related problems like gestational diabetes, high blood pressure, and miscarriage.</p>	<p>✓ <b>Nix the bad habits.</b> You probably know that smoking and alcohol are no-no's during pregnancy. Jerath also recommends women cut back on caffeine as well. "Most studies say about 200 milligrams can be considered safe," she says. "That's a cup of coffee a day."</p>	<p>✓ <b>Establish a workout routine.</b> "Women should be in a regular exercise program three to four times a week," Lee says. "When you're fit before pregnancy, labor is less painful. Babies tend to be leaner, and labor is quicker." 📌</p>
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## How to choose an obstetrician

Here are a few questions to ask yourself to help you choose the right obstetrician.

- Have I asked my primary care physician, friends, and family for recommendations?
- Do I feel comfortable with this doctor?
- Do I have any health conditions that require special care?
- Does this doctor respect my birth plan?
- Does the doctor communicate with me well?

**To find an OB/GYN, go to [parkerhospital.org/birthplace](http://parkerhospital.org/birthplace).**

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