

## Ask The Doctor About Preconception Care

**Q:** "I'm thinking about becoming pregnant. Is there anything I should do to prepare my body first?"

**A:** "All of a baby's internal organs develop in the first trimester and continue to grow for the rest of the pregnancy," says Dr. Fletcher Wilson, M.D., Ob/Gyn at Monadnock OB/GYN Associates. "By starting healthy practices several months before pregnancy, such as taking folic acid, limiting exposure to toxins, avoiding legal and all illegal drugs, controlling chronic medical conditions and learning about genetic diseases, women can decrease the potential for birth defects and other complications."

### Take folic acid

Folic acid is a B vitamin that is found in green leafy vegetables, meats, grains, nuts and cereals. Studies show that it helps prevent neural tube defects like spina bifida. The Centers for Disease Control recommends that all women of childbearing age take at least 400 mcg of folic acid daily, as nearly 50 percent of all pregnancies are unplanned. Dr. Wilson adds that women who are planning to become pregnant should increase that amount to 600-800 mcg at least three months prior to becoming pregnant and throughout pregnancy. Women with a family history of neural tube defects or who are taking seizure medications should talk to their health care provider about increasing the amount to 4,000 mcg (4 milligrams) per day. Folic acid can be found in women's daily multivitamins, prenatal vitamins and over-the-counter at the pharmacy.

### Limit exposure to environmental toxins

Environmental toxins at home and work such as lead paint, pesticides, paint thinners, paint strippers and other chemicals should be avoided.



### Quit smoking

Cigarettes, alcohol and illegal drugs are all dangerous to unborn children, says Dr. Wilson. Smoking increases the chances of miscarriage, premature birth, low birth weight, and fetal death. In addition, babies born to women who smoked during pregnancy are at higher risk for respiratory infections, ear infections, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

### Avoid alcohol

Alcohol should be completely avoided. "There are no studies showing a safe level of alcohol during pregnancy," says Dr. Wilson. Even limited amounts can have lasting effects. According to the American Pregnancy Association, women who drink "moderate" amounts of alcohol could give birth to a baby with Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE). A syndrome related to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), FAE causes mental and physical problems in children. Those include behavioral problems such as learning disabilities, poor school performance, and poor impulse control; problems with memory and attention span; and defects of the skeletal system, heart, kidneys, bones, and/or hearing system.

In addition to the problems noted above, children born with FAS may also experience problems with motor skills, social interaction, problem solving, and speech. FAS is caused by high alcohol consumption, either through binge or regular drinking.

### Know which medications are safe

Many over-the-counter drugs and prescriptions are dangerous during pregnancy. Women who are taking medications should consult with their health care provider prior to becoming pregnant. "In some cases, we can help women choose safe alternatives to the medications they are taking," says Dr. Wilson. "And when an alternative is not available, we provide counseling on coping strategies and other safe ways to alleviate symptoms." A woman should never stop taking a prescribed medication without consulting her doctor.

### Diana Haldenwang,

Executive Director  
Ext. 225

**Theresa Gorgas,**  
Director of Finance and  
Administration  
Ext. 227

**Emmie Comstock,**  
Perinatal Coordinator  
Ext. 228

**Rachel Poczatek,**  
Perinatal Associate  
Ext. 222

**Lynne Gates,**  
FE Coordinator  
Ext. 224

**MaryAnn Geer,**  
FE Co-Coordinator  
Ext. 223

**Noreen Wiater,**  
Project Facilitator  
Ext. 229

**Cheryl Perkins,**  
Facilitated Enroller  
Ext. 244

**Susan Heitz,**  
Floating Enroller  
Ext. 242

**Gerda Mortelette,**  
Floating Enroller  
Ext. 243

**Marjorie Coleman,**  
Data Manager  
Ext. 226

**Magda Chodkowska,**  
Clerical Support Asst.  
Ext. 221

**The mission of  
the Mohawk  
Valley Perinatal  
Network is to  
improve birth  
outcomes and  
maternal, child  
and family health.**

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## Prenatal Care- What you need to know:

Prenatal care is the care you get while you are pregnant. This care can be provided by a doctor, midwife or other health care professional.

The goal of prenatal care is to monitor the progress of a pregnancy and to identify potential problems before they become serious for either mom or baby.

All mothers-to-be benefit from prenatal care. Women who see a health care provider regularly during pregnancy have healthier babies, are less likely to deliver prematurely, and are less likely to have other serious problems related to pregnancy.

During prenatal visits, the health care provider:

- Teaches the woman about pregnancy
- Monitors any medical conditions she may have (such as high blood pressure)
- Tests for problems with the baby
- Tests for health problems in the woman (such as gestational diabetes)
- Refers the woman to services such as support groups, the WIC program or childbirth education classes

### What you can do:

As soon as you think you are pregnant, call your health care provider to find out when you should come in for your first prenatal care appointment.

During your pregnancy, make sure you attend all of your prenatal care appointments, even if you're feeling fine.

Sometimes getting to an appointment may be difficult or it may seem like a waste of time. For the sake of your baby, though, make getting prenatal care a priority.

Ideally, it's best to see your provider before you become pregnant. This is called a preconception visit. This visit can address concerns and issues before you get pregnant.



Source: March of Dimes

## Why is Oral Hygiene so Important During Pregnancy?

Pregnancy is a very exciting and busy time. There are so many changes going on in your body, and your mouth is no exception. Good oral hygiene is extremely important during pregnancy because the increase of hormone levels during pregnancy can cause dental problems to become worse.

Good oral health during pregnancy could also be important to your baby. Researchers show that the serious stage of gum disease, periodontitis, could cause premature birth and low birth weight.



The tips listed here can help you maintain good oral health throughout your pregnancy.

- Visit your dentist for regular checkups and

cleanings. This is the best way to make sure that you are maintaining good oral hygiene.

- Brush your teeth properly at least twice a day to remove plaque.
- Floss your teeth daily. Flossing will remove food debris from in between the teeth that a toothbrush can't reach.
- Use an antimicrobial mouth rinse. Antimicrobial mouth rinses can help prevent gingivitis.
- Brush or scrape your tongue daily to help remove bacteria.
- Eat nutritious meals and healthy snacks.

Be sure to call your dentist if you have any pain, discomfort or bleeding gums during your pregnancy. Now that you know what to do to protect your oral health, sit back, relax and enjoy this beautiful time in your life.

Source: About.com

## Facilitated Enrollment

The Mohawk Valley Perinatal Network offers families the opportunity to apply for Health Insurance through Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus and Medicaid. Our Facilitated Enrollers will help complete the application process and will forward applications to appropriate destinations for final eligibility and enrollment determination.

Mohawk Valley Perinatal Network has traveling enrollers to make it easier for families who live in rural areas to apply for Child / Family Health Plus and Medicaid. These enrollers travel to locations throughout Herkimer, Madison and Oneida Counties. Appointments for these areas are scheduled by calling our office.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call MVPN locally at 732-4657 or you can use our toll free number if you are calling long distance 1-877-267-6193.



## Prenatal Care - PCAP/MOMS

*Pregnant?  
Protect  
yourself and  
your baby.  
Get early  
prenatal care.*

Early and regular check-ups are important to you and your baby's health. The Prenatal Care Assistance Program (PCAP) can help you get the care you need for you and your baby. PCAP offers complete pregnancy care and other health care services to women and teens who live in New York State. The Medicaid Obstetrical and Maternal Service (MOMS) Program provides complete pregnancy services in areas of the state where PCAP health centers are not located. And there's no cost to eligible women who participate in MOMS or PCAP!

Call MVPN at 732-4657 or 1-877-267-6193 for more information.

## Resource Lending Library

Available for loan are videos, books and magazines on topics related to health, pregnancy, breastfeeding, fatherhood, parenting, early childhood development, children with special needs and managed care.

For more information or for a copy of the resource directory, call 732-4657 or 1-877-267-6193.



## What's New At MVPN? BOOT CAMP and Baby Showers

**Boot Camp for New Dads:** Have questions? You can find answers here!

New babies don't show up with an owner's manual!

Boot Camp For New Dads gives expectant and new dads first hand information to help men be the best DAD they can be!

**Community Baby Shower:** A Great place for Moms to meet!

Refreshments and Gifts provided.

Presentations from area service providers on health topics.

Families that are expecting a baby or have children under one year old are welcome to attend!

**Call MVPN at 732-4657 or 1-877-267-6193 to register or for more information on upcoming events!**





1000 Cornelia Street, 2nd Floor  
Utica, NY 13502

**We'd like to hear from you!**  
Send information about upcoming events or ideas for future articles to: MVPN Newsletter, 1000 Cornelia Street, 2nd Floor, Utica, NY 13502; Fax: 624-3682; Email: dhaldenwang@newfamily.org

► **One of 16 Perinatal Networks funded by the NYS Department of Health.**

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### **Avoid illegal drug use**

Illegal drugs are a different matter, says Dr. Wilson. They all increase the risk of stillbirths, SIDS, miscarriage, birth defects and low birth weight. Babies may be born drug-dependent and suffer serious withdrawal symptoms.

"Today, society has many good supports for quitting addictive drugs," says Dr. Wilson. "Before becoming pregnant, seek the help of professional counseling and support groups."

### **Research genetic diseases**

Many genetic diseases, like cystic fibrosis and hemophilia, tend to run in families, while others are associated with particular ethnic groups and nationalities. If a genetic disease is a concern, women can work with a genetic counselor and their health care provider to determine the chances of passing that disease to their babies and their options.

### **Control medical conditions**

Women should talk with a health care provider to safely control major medical conditions such as asthma, high blood pressure and diabetes. "In some cases, prescription medications, such as insulin, have been proven safe during pregnancy. In others, alternative medications and coping strategies can be offered."

Other medical conditions such as high blood pressure and gestational diabetes are sometimes linked to obesity and significantly

overweight mothers.

"Being at an optimal body weight before to pregnancy is recommended.

However, once pregnant, an overweight woman should not diet because it can rob the fetus of necessary nutrients," says Dr.

Wilson. Instead of dieting

during pregnancy, Dr. Wilson suggests eating nutritious meals and snacks are eaten at regular intervals during the day. Women who are obese are generally counseled to gain less weight during pregnancy. "Excess weight can always be lost after the baby is born. The most important thing is to have a healthy baby first," he says.

### **Other considerations**

Immunizations against diseases such as hepatitis B and German measles should be up to date before becoming pregnant.

"By becoming healthy before getting pregnant and continuing those practices throughout pregnancy, women can increase their chances of having a healthy baby and a good pregnancy experience," says Dr. Wilson.



Source: [www.monadnockcommunityhospital.com](http://www.monadnockcommunityhospital.com)