



Assisting
Nature's
Way

PRECONCEPTION GUIDELINES

All women of childbearing age should have risk assessment and counseling as a part of their primary care visits. Preconception care can improve the health outcomes for both mother and baby.

A pre-pregnancy visit should be offered for couples planning a pregnancy.

Efficacious interventions for preconception health include:

1. **Folic Acid Supplementation:** 800ug (.8mg) of Folic Acid daily may reduce the risk of neural tube defects by two thirds.
2. **Rubella Vaccination** for non-immune patients.
3. **Tdap Vaccination** (Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis) prior to pregnancy or after 20 weeks of gestation if no prior vaccination within 10 years.
4. **Hypothyroid Management:** Thyroid replacement needs may increase with pregnancy. Early intervention promotes healthy neurological development in children.
5. **Diabetes Management:** Improving diabetic control can reduce the risk of birth defects 3-fold.
6. **Hepatitis B Vaccination** for non-immune patients.
7. **HIV** screening.
8. **Neisseria gonorrhoea and Chlamydia trachomatis Screening:** Elimination of these bacteria can reduce the risk for ectopic pregnancy, as well as the risk of mental retardation and blindness in the infant.
9. **Phenylalanine Management** in women with phenylketonuria: Elevated levels of phenylalanine in the mother may increase the likelihood of mental retardation in the infant.
10. **Coumadin (warfarin) and Retin-A (isotretinoin) Discontinuation:** These drugs have been shown to complicate pregnancies and cause potential birth defects.
11. **Antiepileptic Medication Modification:** The medications with the lowest potential for birth defects should be utilized during pregnancy.
12. **Smoking and Alcohol Elimination:** Smoking is associated with preterm birth, low weight and other negative pregnancy outcomes. There is NO safe level of alcohol during a pregnancy.
13. **Weight Control:** Achieving a healthy weight (BMI <25) prior to conception reduces the risks for neural tube defects, preterm delivery, diabetes, Cesarean delivery, hypertension, and thromboembolic disease (blood clots).