

Staying fit and taking good care of yourself **can help you feel great and stay healthy**. Good health includes being at a healthy weight, eating the right amounts of healthy foods, and exercising regularly. Being fit and healthy may decrease your need for doctor visits, medicines, or hospital stays.

If you become pregnant, **being fit and healthy can make you less likely to have problems in pregnancy and have a healthy baby**. If you plan to get pregnant someday, remember that the choices you make today can affect your pregnancy later.

Aim for a Healthy Weight

Your weight has a big impact on your health. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of many diseases and health conditions including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and some cancers.

- Know your **Body Mass Index (BMI)**. Body mass index is a formula used to measure a person's level of overweight using height and weight measurements. Your health care provider can help you figure out your BMI or you can figure it out yourself by going to <http://www.consumer.gov/weightloss/bmi.htm>
- A BMI between 18.5 and 24.9 is considered healthy
- To keep a healthy weight balance the number of calories you consume with the number of calories your body uses
- Women who are underweight or overweight when they get pregnant are more likely to have a baby born too early
- Overweight women are more likely to have problems in their pregnancy and labor
- Some women who are underweight or overweight may have trouble getting pregnant

Eat Healthy Foods

A big part of staying healthy is eating healthy. This includes **eating a variety of foods, like vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole-grain, fat-free, or low fat milk and milk products, and lean meats**.

- Eat more fruits and vegetables every day
- Limit sweets, fats, salt, alcohol, and soda
- Pay attention to serving sizes so you do not eat too much

Folic acid is extremely important to a women's health. It can lower the risk of heart disease and some types of cancers in women. Folic acid is a vitamin found in leafy green vegetables, beans, and fortified bread and cereals.

- Folic acid is needed to make red blood cells which carry oxygen to all parts of the body
- Folic acid can prevent defects in your baby's brain and spinal cord, if taken before and during the first few weeks of pregnancy
- **All women should take a multivitamin with 400-800 micrograms of folic acid every day**

Iron

Women who may become pregnant need to eat foods high in iron. Iron also carries oxygen in the blood. Foods high in iron include meats, fortified cereals, beans, and spinach. Iron works better in the body when eaten with other foods high in vitamin C like oranges, grapefruit, strawberries, tomatoes, green peppers, broccoli, cabbage, and cantaloupe.

Be Active

Regular activity can improve your health by:

- Decreasing your risk of dying of heart disease. Heart disease is the nation's leading cause of death for women
- Decreasing your risk for stroke, colon and breast cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure
- Helping to control weight

- Helping to build strong bones, muscles, and joints
- Preventing falls
- Relieving the pain of arthritis
- Reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Improving cognitive function

Aim for 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day. Even short bursts of activity can improve your health. With a little creativity and planning, **even busy people can make room for physical activity.** Think about your schedule and find time to be more active.

Consider the following suggestions:

- Work towards increasing the number of minutes you are physically active
- Walk, cycle, jog, skate, etc., to work, to school, the store, or to your place of worship
- Park your car or get on or off the bus farther away from your destination
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator
- Take fitness breaks-walking or doing desk exercises - instead of taking cigarette or coffee breaks
- Gardening, or fix things around the house
- Exercise while watching TV (example: use hand weights, stationary bicycle/treadmill/stair climber, or stretch)

Keep in mind

- For more information on how to be healthy before you get pregnant go to: www.marchofdimes.com
- For healthy recipes go to: <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov> or <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org>
- For information on Health Start Services go to: <http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/owch/healthstart.htm>
- For nutrition information go to <http://www.mypyramid.gov> and <http://www.hrsa.gov/womenshealth>

Health Care Provider Instructions

My Next Steps

References:

Arizona Department of Health Services, Bureau of Women's and Children's Health (ADSH/BWCH) - <http://www.azdhs.gov/phs/owch/index.htm>
Net wellness Consumer Health Information - <http://www.netwellness.org/healthtopics/pregnancy>
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/importance/index.htm>
BMI Calculator - <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/index.htm>
United States Department of Agriculture - <http://www.mypyramid.gov>

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