

# Pointers For *Parents-To-Be*

## So You Want To Have A Baby—Where Do You Start?

(NAPSA)—You've made the big decision to start a family. You think you're prepared financially and emotionally, but what about your health?

Since the first few weeks of pregnancy are crucial to the baby's development, the mother and father should be healthy before they try to conceive a child. Should fertility issues arise, you will be ahead of the game by taking steps now to be in the best physical condition to conceive.

### **Preconception Checkup**

Women considering pregnancy should visit their doctor at least three months before trying to conceive. This helps the doctor, mother-to-be and partner plan steps for a successful pregnancy.

Your doctor may cover the following in a prenatal checkup:

- Medical history and possible health concerns
- Current medications
- Immunization history
- Physical exam/Pap smear
- Suggested prenatal vitamins.

### **Men's Health**

As couples prepare for pregnancy, the focus is generally on the woman's health. But there are things men can do as well:

- Maintain an ideal weight
- Eliminate alcohol and tobacco
- Try to reduce stress
- Avoid hot tubs, saunas and cycling, as heat on the testicles can impact sperm quality.

### **Women's Health**

In general, women should take up healthier sleep, diet and exercise habits before trying to conceive. Women should also take these steps to protect their unborn baby:

- Eliminate alcohol/tobacco



- Cut down on caffeine
- Consult their doctor before taking any prescription or over-the-counter drugs and herbs
- Keep clear of hazardous chemicals such as pesticides.

Tracking menstrual cycles can also help women determine when they ovulate, which allows them to better time intercourse to become pregnant.

### **Problems Conceiving**

Although many may not realize it, one in six couples nationwide will have problems with their fertility. Even men and women who stay healthy and do all the right things may still have some difficulties.

Women under the age of 35 who have had unprotected intercourse for one year without getting pregnant and women over the age of 35 who have for six months with no success should consider seeing their OB/GYN or fertility specialist (Reproductive Endocrinologist). Fertility dramatically declines as a woman reaches her mid-to-late-30s, so the earlier a couple seeks a fertility evaluation, the better able they'll be to take steps to conceive.

For more information on conception and fertility, visit [www.fertilityjourney.com](http://www.fertilityjourney.com).