

**Q: I would like to start our family. What should I do?**

Today's answer is provided by Jeffery Cherney, MD of Women's Health Specialists

A: If you are planning a pregnancy, see your doctor first. Your doctor will help you identify things that may pose a risk to you and your baby. You and your doctor will want to discuss your health – diet and lifestyle, medical history, use of birth control, past pregnancies, medications and any diseases that run in your family. Your answers will determine if you need to make any changes to prepare for pregnancy. You can also plan for special care that you may need.

By planning ahead, you can be physically and emotionally prepared for your pregnancy. Here's a short checklist of things you can do to be prepared.

- Make a doctor's appointment.
- Start taking a folic acid supplement and/or a prenatal vitamin every day. Taking a folic acid supplement before you become pregnant reduces the chance of certain birth defects. You can purchase over-the-counter prenatal vitamins at any drug store without a prescription.
- Review your employer's maternity leave policy and your health insurance's maternity coverage.
- Develop a maternity and baby budget.
- Reduce the amount caffeine you use.
- If you smoke or drink alcohol, now is a good time to quit.



For more information, call (920) 749-4000.

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