

A Heart-Healthy Pregnancy

First things first: your pre-pregnancy health

Taking care of your heart health is critically important during pregnancy. But the actions you take before becoming pregnant can reduce risk for both mother and baby.

If you're planning to become pregnant, these health goals will put you on the right track.

Control your weight

Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and fiber. Get regular exercise, even if it's as simple as walking 20 minutes a day.

Add nutrients to your diet

A [well-balanced diet](#) is a great place to start, but you might benefit from extra nutrients. Talk with your doctor about adding folic acid, calcium and prenatal vitamins to your routine.

Stop smoking

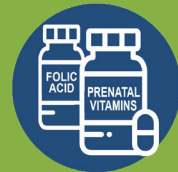
Smokers struggle more with pregnancy-related changes to the cardiovascular system than nonsmokers. Women face unique challenges when quitting smoking, but targeted support is just a click away. Find tools and resources [here](#) to help you stop smoking.

Review your current medications

Let your health care team know about your plans to become pregnant. Your doctors may adjust your current medications in preparation for the changes you'll experience during pregnancy.

Limit caffeine and alcohol

Some research suggests a link between too much caffeine and fertility problems. A number of larger studies point to heavy alcohol consumption as having an adverse impact on fertility. [Alcohol use during pregnancy](#) can cause birth defects and developmental disabilities, collectively known as fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.



Managing your cardiac conditions during pregnancy

A safer, healthier pregnancy starts with understanding the relationship between your cardiovascular system and pregnancy, and then creating a care plan with your doctors.

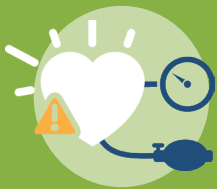
During pregnancy, changes occur to the heart and blood vessels, causing the heart to work harder. Heart disease is the leading cause of pregnancy-related deaths. Women with heart disease should be closely monitored during pregnancy. To avoid potential risk to the fetus, your doctors might change or adjust your medications and treatments during your pregnancy.



If you have any of these preexisting conditions, talk with your doctors about how your pregnancy might be affected and what you can do to mitigate the risk:

- Heart disease
- Chronic high blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes

According to the American Heart Association, heart-related health conditions can be addressed during pregnancy with proper monitoring and treatment.



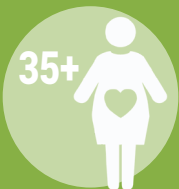
Preeclampsia is a serious pregnancy-related high blood pressure disorder. Several recent studies have linked regular exercise during pregnancy to preeclampsia prevention.



Valvular heart disease is especially concerning during pregnancy because it increases the risk of ischemic stroke. Anti-clotting medications may be appropriate after the first trimester.



Heart rhythm disorders are on the rise in the U.S., potentially because women are having babies later in life. If severe enough, medication or surgery may be appropriate.



Advanced maternal age — defined as 35 or older — is associated with a higher risk of premature birth, chronic hypertension, preeclampsia and gestational diabetes. Talk with your doctor to evaluate your risks and care plan.