



Resiliency Plan



So, you want to become parents?

What should you know before conceiving?

First, some information:

- Will your genes have a large impact on your child's development?
 - No, not really. **Heritability** is a term used to describe the proportion how traits vary between individuals in a population due to genetics.
 - Heritability does **not** give insight into whether or not a trait will develop in a person, nor is there any method to estimate heritability.
 - Due to many studies of identical twins, researchers have discovered that both the environment and genetics play an important role in determining whether or not an individual will have a particular trait.

Remember: Genes and the environment operate together!

What should you do *before* conceiving?

- Mother:

- Make sure you are not smoking or exposed to secondhand smoke, as it may make it more difficult to conceive
- Cut back on drinking so it is not difficult to abstain when you are pregnant
- Cut back on caffeine intake to avoid miscarriage and withdrawal symptoms
- Try to lose weight if you are overweight or gain weight if you are underweight to make it easier to conceive and easier to deliver (talk to your doctor first!)
- Begin taking daily multivitamins with folic acid
- Go to the doctor to check your fertility and see what steps you need to take as an individual to be healthier and ready to bear a child

- Father:

- If you are a smoker, do not smoke anywhere near your partner
- Go to the doctor to learn about your fertility
- Healthy eating habits promote healthier sperm

Both parents should find out and become educated about any family history of disease

Both parents should also become educated on pregnancy and all it entails through classes, books, or their doctor.



So, you've conceived...

What is happening within the 2nd to 8th weeks?

- The 2nd to 8th weeks of pregnancy is known as the embryonic stage. This stage is a critical period of rapid growth in which three layers of cells are formed: the endoderm, mesoderm, and ectoderm
 - This is known as organogenesis
- The endoderm forms the lungs, urinary tracts, pancreas, internal glands, liver and digestive tract
- The mesoderm forms the skeleton, heart, blood, muscles, and circulatory system
- The ectoderm forms the nervous system, hair, teeth and skin
 - The neural tube, which eventually becomes the spinal cord and brain, forms from the development of the ectoderm
- This little embryo has a heartbeat and visible facial features, and is still developing rapidly.



So, you've conceived...

What should you do to ensure healthy growth?

- Teratogens are factors that can cause harm to an embryo or fetus
 - These factors can be from disease, drugs, or the environment
- The period of the embryo is known as the sensitive period, where the embryo is especially susceptible to harm
- It is important to visit the doctor to ensure that you do not have any diseases that may harm the developing embryo or fetus
- Even small amounts of alcohol can damage a fetus
- Exposure to cigarette smoke, even secondhand, can harm a fetus
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, tobacco smoke, and environmental toxins
- Be sure to visit your doctor if you begin to feel ill to see what steps you need to take to protect the health of you and your developing child

Feeling stressed?

How does stress affect the fetus?

- Can stress affect your fetus?
 - Yes, but only if it is prolonged, high stress
- Stress produces hormones like adrenaline and cortisol, which can enter the bloodstream of the fetus
- High stress can lead to premature delivery and low birth weight, among other complications
- When born, infants of high stress mothers may be more temperamentally difficult than those born to moderate to low stress mothers
- Complications in a baby or fetus due to stress are most common when the mother feels neutral or negatively about her pregnancy or marriage /relationship and when they have no social support





Feeling stressed?

What can you do to manage your stress?

- As mentioned before, social support is very important to new parents
 - If you do not have any friends or family, counseling to manage stress is a very useful and successful option
- Some tips to manage stress on your own:
 - Go on a walk to get your heart rate up
 - Prioritize what your “to do” list
 - Try to get as much sleep as you can in a night
 - Avoid negative people or situations— don’t watch the news if you’re feeling upset and don’t surround yourself with people who don’t make you feel relaxed and pleasant

How can you prepare for childbirth?

- There are many childbirthing classes which go over many aspects of child birth
- Know the signs of labor (extremely painful and persistent contractions, water breaking, etc.) so you can know what to expect and be ready when the time comes
- Find a doctor ahead of time that you feel comfortable with and works for you financially
- Be sure you know who to call when it happens—
dogsitter, birth attendees, etc.

Ways to deliver your baby

- Home birth: If you do not like hospitals, a home birth is a completely viable option. You can even find a midwife to help aid the birthing process!
 - Pros: Natural, comfortable environment
 - Cons: Less access to important equipment in case something goes wrong during the birth
- Hospital birth: You can either opt out of medication and have what is called a natural childbirth, or use medication to relieve the pain
 - Pros: Access to medical equipment, knowledgeable staff
 - Cons: Hospitals can cause discomfort for many people, hospitals are full of sick people who may transfer bacteria or germs

Ways to deliver your baby

Continued from previous...

- **Cesarean Section (C-section):** The newborn is removed through an incision from the uterus. Usually only a method when
 - **Pros:** Can prevent anoxia from causing permanent brain damage and other complications that can result from child birth, such as prolonged anoxia
 - **Cons:** Increased recovery time, more painful

It will be okay!

- Taking small steps such as seeing your doctor and cutting bad habits before conceiving is not only healthy for you, but for your developing child as well
- Avoiding teratogens is important, but keep in mind that most babies (95%!) are born completely normal
- Make sure you have social support and stress management techniques as well as a delivery method picked out in advance
- Breathe in, breathe out. While it may seem overwhelming, having a child is a wonderful experience for both the mother and father, and you will do just fine!



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