

## Why should I take care of health problems before pregnancy?

Chronic diseases are long-lasting health problems that need medical care. Taking care of chronic diseases before pregnancy can lower the risks of birth defects, pregnancy loss, and problems during pregnancy and childbirth.

## What is High Blood Pressure?

High blood pressure (hypertension) is when the pressure in your blood vessels is too high. It is common and can be dangerous if not treated. People with high blood pressure may not feel bad. The only way to know is to check your blood pressure. Things that increase the risk of having high blood pressure can be:

- Genetics (family history).
- Being overweight or obese.
- Not moving your body enough.
- High-salt diet (like fast food).
- Drinking too much alcohol.
- Tobacco use.
- Older age.

**Almost half of adults with high blood pressure don't know they have it!**

Eating better, quitting tobacco, and moving your body more can lower blood pressure. Some people may still need medication. If you are on blood pressure medication and planning pregnancy or are already pregnant, talk your doctor to make sure taking your medication is still safe. You can also talk to your doctor about checking your blood pressure with a blood pressure cuff at home.

## What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a chronic disease where your body can't process sugar and starch correctly, so sugar builds up in your blood. There are a few different types of diabetes, including Type 2 diabetes and gestational diabetes. Some people manage Type 2 diabetes by watching what they eat and moving their body every day. Others need to take medicine. Your doctor will help you decide the best option for you to keep your blood sugar at the right level. An A1c is one way to look at blood sugar levels. Having an A1c below 6.5% before becoming pregnant improves the chance of a healthy pregnancy.

Gestational diabetes (GDM) starts during pregnancy, even in people who did not have diabetes before. GDM can cause problems with the baby before they are born, and after, if it is not closely watched. GDM can turn in to Type 2 diabetes. If a birthing person had GDM during pregnancy, they should get tested for Type 2 diabetes by the time their baby is 12 weeks old. Kids born from GDM pregnancies have a higher chance of obesity and type 2 diabetes later in life.



## What is Thyroid Disease?

Thyroid disease is a chronic disease that changes the hormones your body makes. Hormones help your body work normally. When your body makes too many hormones (hyperthyroidism), it can make you feel tired, make your heart beat faster, lose too much weight, or make you feel nervous. When you don't make enough hormones (hypothyroidism), you can feel tired, gain weight, or feel cold. If you have thyroid disease, you will test your hormone levels regularly. You might take medicine to keep your hormone levels normal.

## What are other chronic diseases that can affect pregnancy?

Talk to your obstetric provider to learn about how other chronic disease might impact your pregnancy.

- Lupus.
- Seizure Disorders.
- Low Iron.
- Asthma.
- Depression.

## How can I take care of my health problems before pregnancy?

**You have choices!** There are many things you can do to take care of your chronic disease.



**See your healthcare provider often.** Together you can make sure your body is ready for a baby.



**Get screened!** Providers can do simple tests to find out if you have a disease that can hurt you or your baby.



**Check your chronic disease often.** If you have a chronic disease, you may need to see your healthcare provider more before and during pregnancy.



**Take your medicine!** If you take any medicine now, do not stop if you get pregnant until you talk with your provider.



**Talk to your obstetric provider** about any health problems that may affect pregnancy. Make a plan to be as healthy as you can before and during pregnancy.



## Resources:

Ohio Department of Health  
Resources for Women



U.S. Office of Population  
Affairs; Title X Family  
Planning Clinic Locator

