

# Pregnancy Planning Guide



## Thinking About Getting Pregnant?

Texas Health has an online guide with tips to help you on your quest to becoming a mom.



**Texas Health**  
Resources®



# Baby on the Brain?





# Are You Ready?

Are you ready to have a baby? Although many people say it, you really will know when you're ready to grow your family. Here are some questions you can ask yourself to help gauge if you're ready.

## Questions to ask yourself:

- Do you feel ready?
- Are you in a place to put the needs of another above your own?
- Do you feel you are emotionally ready?
- Are you and your partner's relationship in a steady place?
- Are you excited about growing your family?



# Talking to Your Partner

It may seem like a no-brainer, but making sure you and your partner are on the same page before you get pregnant is helpful.

## **Questions to discuss with your partner:**

- Are you both ready to give up your “me” time?
- Will you share in child-care responsibilities like changing diapers, feedings, etc?
- What are your views on child care, help from family, a nanny?
- Are you going to work or stay at home?
- What religion will your child be and what traditions will you celebrate?



I'm Ready. Now What?





# Early Preparations

## **Schedule a Check-Up**

Your doctor or midwife will likely ask you a series of questions that look at your medical history, your periods, medications and other things to help identify any potential issues that might impact your chances of conceiving.

## **Review Your Benefits**

Look into the maternity policy with your employer. No matter what kind of health insurance plan you have, chances are you'll face out-of-pocket costs.

## **Save a Little Money**

A pregnancy means more doctor visits, more copays, medications, etc. Even if all you do is put aside \$20 a paycheck, this may help build up a small fund to help with expenses.





# Preparing Your Body

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists suggests the following to help you prepare your body.

## **Add a Prenatal Vitamin**

Start taking a daily prenatal vitamin one month before trying to get pregnant.

## **Eat a Healthy Diet**

This is the time to say “yes” to nutrient-dense foods. Not getting enough nutrients can affect the regularity of your periods and can even impact a man’s semen.

## **Evaluate Your Weight**

Being underweight or overweight may cause problems, such as issues ovulating or increase potential complications during pregnancy.



## **Make Time to Exercise**

Some of the safest exercises when you're trying to get pregnant are walking, swimming, yoga and low-impact aerobics that carry little risk of injury.







## What to Avoid

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists suggests some lifestyle changes too.

### **Too Much Caffeine**

Monitor your caffeine intake, but typically consuming less than 200 mg of caffeine daily (1 12oz cup of coffee) is safe when trying to conceive.

### **Smoking and Alcohol**

Before you get pregnant is a good time to stop smoking, drinking alcohol and using drugs because stopping harmful behavior before pregnancy may reduce the risks of some birth defects.

### **Some Medications**

During your preconception check up, be sure to tell your provider about all of the medications you are taking. Do not stop taking prescription medications until you have talked with your doctor.



## Now, Find a Doctor

You have a few options when it comes to care providers. Whoever you choose, it should be someone you trust.

### **Ask Your Friends**

A good place to start your search is to ask your friends for providers they've used or have heard positive things about.

### **Location**

You will want to pick a doctor that is close to your home or office — you will visit them a lot during pregnancy.

### **Compatibility is Key**

How long does it take to get an appointment? Is the office clean? Do you feel welcome? If something feels off or you're just not comfortable, don't feel obligated to continue with that doctor if you don't think it's a good fit.





## Need an OB/GYN?

Selecting an OB/GYN is a very personal decision. Do the research, read the reviews and, above all else, don't be afraid to ask the questions that matter to you.

**To find an OB/GYN, call  
1-877-THR-WELL or visit  
[TexasHealth.org/OB](https://www.texashealth.org/ob)**



# Starting the Process







# Understanding Your Cycle

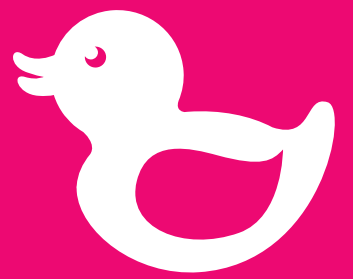
Your body is ready, so now what?

## **Determine the Length of Your Cycle**

Start by marking your calendar on the day you get your period. The length of your menstrual cycle is the number of days from the first day of bleeding in your last period, to the first day of bleeding in your next.

## **Determine Your Fertile Window**

To calculate your fertile window, you need to determine what day you ovulate. In the average menstrual cycle, ovulation occurs 14 days before the menstrual period arrives. So if you subtract 14 days from the length of your cycle, you'll get an idea of when you ovulate.



# Time to Try

## **When and How Often?**

You are most fertile 2-3 days before you ovulate. Most health care practitioners recommend you and your partner have intercourse every day or every other day beginning five days before ovulation and continuing one day after ovulation.

## **Don't Worry About Positions**

There is no scientific evidence saying that one position for intercourse is better than another. However, remember gravity can play a role.

## **Timing is Everything**

The ovulation process happens fast. An average egg lives for less than 24 hours and an average sperm lives for less than 72, so it's important to create a situation where their paths are likely to cross.





## Don't Stress Out

You've determined your cycle length and approximately when you should ovulate. What else can help?

### **Talk to Your Partner**

You've read this Pregnancy Planning Guide and possibly all websites on the internet about ovulation. You're learning this, but is your partner? Be sure to talk to them about timing and your fertile window to avoid resentments that might build if your partner doesn't understand the process.

### **Stay Positive**

Easier said than done! Chances are you may see a negative pregnancy test or two, and remember it's not the end of the world. It may take a few months of trying.



## Fertility Tracking Tools

There are a number of fertility charting tools to help you identify your fertile days.

- Ovulation calendars
- Ovulation predictor kits
- Watch for changes in your cervical mucus
- Changes to your basal body temperature

**For more information, visit  
[TexasHealth.org/Ovulation](https://www.texashealth.org/ovulation)**



# Could You Be Pregnant?





# Early Signs of Pregnancy

When you're trying to get pregnant, every single symptom may be interpreted as early signs of pregnancy.

## When Will You See Symptoms?

The earliest signs of pregnancy may show up a few days after conception while others aren't experienced until two weeks into a pregnancy. It's also perfectly possible to be pregnant without noticing any symptoms.

## Early Symptoms

According to the American Pregnancy Association, some early pregnancy symptoms may include:

- Light bleeding or a missed period
- Nausea
- Sore breasts
- Aversions to certain foods
- Fatigue
- Mood swings
- High basal body temperatures





# Taking a Pregnancy Test

If you think you might be pregnant you want to know as soon as possible.

## Understanding Pregnancy Tests

Pregnancy tests detect a hormone, called hCG, that begins appearing and increasing slightly every day in your urine after fertilization. Pregnancy tests need the amount of hCG to be a certain level before it will trigger a positive result.

## When to Take a Test

Seven to 10 days after ovulation, many women will have a enough hCG to confirm pregnancy with a sensitive home pregnancy test.

## Could a Negative Be a Positive?

Possibly. If you test too early in your cycle, you could get a negative result even though you may be pregnant. Wait a few days and then test again.



# When It's Taking Too Long

Month after month, you're turning up negative tests. What do you do?

## When to Talk to Your Doctor

The American Society for Reproductive Medicine suggests you might want to start a discussion with your OB/GYN if:

- You are younger than 35, you haven't gotten pregnant after 12 months of unprotected intercourse.
- You are over 35, you haven't gotten pregnant after 6 months of unprotected intercourse.

## Coping With the Wait

If your friends and family are asking when you're going to have a baby, it can be upsetting. Be honest and let them know you've been trying. You might be surprised how often others have dealt with similar issues. It may help to realize you aren't alone. Or if you're not in the mood to discuss, try phrases like "we'll see" and "when it happens it happens".





## Start Your Journey

Whether it's finding an OB/GYN or answering your ovulation questions, we want to provide support for your journey to motherhood. To learn more about the pregnancy process or to find an OB/GYN, visit:

**[TexasHealth.org/Family](https://www.texashealth.org/family)**