

A Reproductive Life Plan

Important questions to answer:

Do you want to have children one day?

If you answered YES:

- How many children would you like to have?
- How old would you like to be when you have your first child?
- How many years would you like there to be between your children?
- Once you are sexually active, do you have a plan to prevent pregnancy until you are ready?
- Who can you speak with about birth control options? Your mother? Another family member? Your doctor? Your teacher?
- If you get pregnant before you are ready, what will you do?

If you answered NO:

- Once you are sexually active, do you have a plan to prevent pregnancy?
- If you get pregnant anyway, what will you do?

Healthy Living

Even with the use of birth control, pregnancy sometimes happens. It's important that you lead a healthy lifestyle so that if pregnancy should occur, your baby will have a healthy start in

life. Don't engage in risky behavior. If you answer YES to any of the questions below, please ask for help in quitting.

- Do you smoke?
- Do you drink alcohol? Do you binge drink?
- Do you use recreational drugs or abuse medications?
- Do you diet or overeat excessively?

Medical History Questions

During your childhood, your doctor administered vaccines to help protect you from various diseases. Are your vaccines up to date?

Since health problems can sometimes run in families, you should identify problems that have happened to immediate family members (parents, brothers and sisters) and discuss with your doctor ways you can reduce your risk of having these problems. When you know who the father of your baby will be, ask him to identify these problems in his family too:

- A baby born prematurely or too early
- A baby who weighed less than 5 pounds 8 ounces at birth
- Pre-eclampsia (high blood pressure in pregnancy) or eclampsia (seizures)
- Gestational diabetes (diabetes that starts during pregnancy)
- Two or more miscarriages
- Infertility problems
- Still born baby (baby not alive at birth)

- Baby with a heart defect
- Depression before or after delivery
- Asthma
- Heart of lung disease
- Stroke
- Other

Your emotional health and development are essential when considering when to start or expand your family. Not only must your body be in its best health, but your mind must be as well. Consider the following questions when you are developing your Reproductive Life Plan and set goals to be sure you are where you want to be before you plan your child.

- Do you often feel sad, anxious, overwhelmed or worried for longer than two weeks and what sort of things make you feel that way?
- What types of things make you angry and how do you calm yourself?
- What do you do if someone says something that you don't like?
- Is there anyone in your life who is physically abusing you?
- Is there anyone in your life who often says mean or hurtful things to you?
- Is there anyone in your life who is forcing you to take part in sexual activities that make you feel uncomfortable?

Dream a little...

Your dreams are very important to living a happy life and raising happy children. Think about your future goals. In those dreams, when do you see yourself starting a family?

- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- What will your life be like at that time?
- How much education do you want to complete?
- What type of work or career do you want to have?
- Will you continue to work after you become a mother or father?
- If you want to be a stay-at-home mom, will you be able to afford it?
- It is important to have a financial plan before having children. You will need a safe place to live, money for expenses, transportation and medical insurance.

Sources: March of Dimes, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Health Plan of New York

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