

Getting a Physical Exam Before Getting Pregnant

You'll need a physical exam before you get pregnant. Your health care provider will be looking for any health problems that could be a risk to your health or your baby's health. If possible, it's best if these problems are found and treated even before you get pregnant.

Share your health history with your health care provider. Remember to include:

- How you are taking care of your diabetes
- Menstrual and pregnancy history
- Birth control method
- Health problems (for example, kidney disease, high blood pressure, infections, other diseases)
- Whether you have support from family and friends

HEART

Pregnancy puts an extra workload on your heart. Your health care provider will want to perform a check-up on the health of your heart and your blood pressure.

NERVES

Your health care provider will look for signs of damage to nerves (neuropathy). Such nerve damage can affect your heart rate and blood pressure. Tell your health care provider if you often feel dizzy when you stand up.

Nerve damage can also affect your stomach. Tell your health care provider if you often feel sick to your stomach, vomit, or have diarrhea.

KIDNEYS

If you have chronic kidney disease (CKD), it may get worse during pregnancy. This may only last while you're pregnant. CKD increases your risk of high blood pressure in the second half of your pregnancy.

EYES

See an eye doctor for a comprehensive dilated eye exam to look for signs of diabetes-related eye disease.

If you have diabetes-related retinopathy, have it treated before you get pregnant. It may start or get worse while you are pregnant. It can also be treated during pregnancy, so keep getting eye exams while you are pregnant. After you have your baby, your eye disease will most likely go back to the level it was before you got pregnant.

MEDICATIONS

Your health care provider will review all medications you take (make sure to bring a list of all medications you are currently taking).

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LAB WORK

Lab tests to be done before you get pregnant include:

- ❑ **A1C:** An A1C test shows your average blood glucose (blood sugar) level over the last two to three months. This can help assess how well you are managing your diabetes. As you get ready to stop using birth control, have an A1C test done every one to two months until it's normal.
- ❑ **Kidney:** Kidney function tests are routinely done before pregnancy. If you are taking an ACE inhibitor for blood pressure, you should be asked to stop taking it before these tests are done.
- ❑ **Thyroid:** If you have type 1 diabetes, a blood sample is taken to see if there are thyroid problems.

TALK ABOUT THE RESULTS

Once the exams are done and the lab work is back, you and your health care provider can have a talk about risks pregnancy may pose to your health, the risks to your fetus if your blood glucose levels are not in the normal range, and the work it will take to lower these risks and increase your health and that of your baby.

More handouts about this and other topics can be found at professional.diabetes.org/PatientEd

Part of the Women's Health Initiative from the American Diabetes Association®.