



Reproductive Life Plan

A Quick Guide for Women Veterans

How to Make a Plan

Thinking about your goals for having or not having children and how to achieve these goals is called a *reproductive life plan*. There are many kinds for reproductive life plans. Your plan will depend on your personal goals and dreams.

First, think about your goals for school, for your job or career, and for other important things in your life. Then, think about how having children fits in with those goals. If you do not want to have children (now or ever), think about how you will prevent pregnancy and what steps you can take to be as healthy as possible. If you do want to have children one day, think about when and under what conditions you want to become pregnant. This can help ensure that you and your partner are healthy and ready when you choose to have a baby.

Try to include as many details as possible in your plan. Some people find it helpful to write their plan down on a piece of paper or in a journal. Be sure to talk with your health care professionals. Doctors and counselors can help you make your plan and achieve your goals.



Questions to Get Started if You Do Not Want to Have Children

When making a reproductive life plan, the following questions might be helpful. These are probably not all of the questions that you will want to ask yourself, but they will help you to get started.

If you **DO NOT** want to have children, you might ask yourself:

- How do I plan to prevent pregnancy? Am I sure that I or my partner will be able to use the method chosen without any problems?
- What if I become pregnant by accident?
- What steps can I take to be as healthy as possible?
- What medical conditions (such as diabetes, obesity, mental health issues, and high blood pressure) or other concerns (such as smoking and using drugs) do I need to talk about with my doctor?
- Is it possible I could ever change my mind and want to have children one day?





Questions to Get Started if You Do Want to Have Children

If you **DO** want to have children one day, you might ask yourself:

- How old do I want to be when I start and when I stop having children?
- How many children do I want to have?
- How many years do I want between my children?
- What method do I plan to use to prevent pregnancy until I'm ready to have children? Am I sure that I or my partner will be able to use this method without any problems?
- What, if anything, do I want to change about my health, relationships, home, school, work, finances, or other parts of my life to get ready to have children?
- Are there any hazards in my home or workplace that could affect a pregnancy? How can these be addressed?
- What steps can I take to be as healthy as possible (such as eating right, getting to or maintaining a healthy weight, and taking prenatal vitamins) before getting pregnant?
- What medical conditions (such as diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure) and mental health issues (such as anxiety or depression) or other concerns (such as smoking and using drugs) do I need to talk about with my doctor?
- What medications (including prescription, over-the-counter, and herbal/natural supplements) am I currently on and how could they affect pregnancy? Is it safe to continue taking them throughout pregnancy?

Take Action

Once you have a plan, take action. For example, if you decide to use birth control, make sure to use it consistently and appropriately. Or, if you decided to quit smoking, follow through and get help if needed.

Keep in mind that your plan doesn't have to be set in stone. Life is unpredictable! So, make a plan today, give it some thought each year, and expect to make changes along the way.

Preconception Visit Appointment Guide

If you are sexually active, make an appointment with your doctor to talk about your preconception health. Bring this list of talking points to be sure you don't forget anything. If you run out of time at your visit, schedule a follow-up visit to make sure everything is covered.

Ask your doctor about:	Write down what your doctor says here:
Family planning and birth control	
Taking folic acid	
Vaccines and screenings you might need, including a Pap test and tests for sexually transmitted infections	
Health problems you have, including how pregnancy may affect, or be affected by, health problems	
Medications you use, including prescription, over-the-counter drugs, and herbal/natural supplements	
Ways to improve your overall health and avoid illness	
Quitting smoking	
Alcohol use	
Hazards in your home or workplace that could affect pregnancy	
Health problems that run in your family	
Problems you've had with prior pregnancies	
Social support concerns, including domestic violence	
Your partner's health and family history	

Other Resources

Use the following resources to get more information about VA women's health care and general health care, as well as information on how to stay as healthy as possible when planning for and during a pregnancy.

Women Veteran's Healthcare

Web: www.womenshealth.va.gov

Phone (VA healthcare benefits): 1-877-222-8387

Vet Center Locator

Web: www2.va.gov/directory/guide/vetcenter_fish.asp

Phone (VA healthcare benefits): 1-877-222-8387

Veteran's Crisis Line

Web: www.veteranscrisisline.net

Phone: 1-800-273-8255, press 1

National Center for PTSD

Web: www.ptsd.va.gov

PTSD Information Voice Mail: 1-802-296-6300

Office of Women's Health

www.womenshealth.gov

Phone: 1-800-994-9662

CDC - Pregnancy Homepage

Web: www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/pregnancy_gateway/index.html

Phone (headquarters): 1-800-232-4636

CDC - BMI Calculator

Web: www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/index.html

Phone: 1-800-232-4636

CDC - Vaccination and Immunizations

Web: www.cdc.gov/vaccines

Phone: 1-800-232-4636

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

Web: www.samhsa.gov

Phone: 1-877-726-4727

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Web: www.choosemyplate.gov



The information in this "Reproductive Life Plan: A Quick Guide for Women Veterans" was obtained from the following sources:

- "Preconception Health and Health Care, My Reproductive Life Plan" - www.cdc.gov
- <http://womenshealth.gov/pregnancy/before-you-get-pregnant/preconception-health.cfm>
- "Preconception Visit Print and Go Guide" - www.womenshealth.gov



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