Preconception Counseling Checklist

The goal of preconception (or prepregnancy) care is to optimize health outcomes by providing education and addressing modifiable risk factors. Any visit with a client who has reproductive potential is an opportunity for preconception counseling. After a discussion of the client’s reproductive goals, a preconception counseling conversation can be introduced with: “Since you said _______, would you like to talk about ways to be prepared for a healthy pregnancy?”

To help clients be prepared for a healthy pregnancy, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends that providers assess for:

- **Pregnancy intention**
  Timing of desired pregnancy—“Would you like to have (more) children? When do you think that might be?”

- **Folic acid**
  400 mcg of folic acid daily for at least one month before and during pregnancy (4 mg daily if history of seizure disorder or infant with neural tube defects)

- **Medical conditions**
  Diabetes mellitus, chronic hypertension, hypothyroidism, bariatric surgery, mood disorders

- **Family history**
  Genetic disorders, birth defects, cystic fibrosis, Fragile X, hemoglobinopathies, and if of Ashkenazi descent: Tay-Sachs, Canavan, familial dysautonomia, etc.

- **Use of teratogenic medications**
  ACE I, ARB, androgens, carbamazepine, lithium, methimazole, methotrexate, minoxidil, misoprostol, mycophenolate mofetil, phenytoin, trimethadione, paramethadione, retinoids, sulfa, tetracycline, thalidomide, valproic acid, vitamin A, warfarin, etc.

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**NOTES:**
- MMR = measles–mumps–rubella; Tdap = tetanus-diphtheria-acellular pertussis; HPV = human papillomavirus; STI = sexually transmitted infections; CDC = Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**REFERENCES**
### Immunization status

**Tdap, MMR, hepatitis B, varicella, annual influenza (flu), and HPV**

Provide or refer for: flu shot; MMR and varicella vaccine if not pregnant and won’t become pregnant for one month; and other immunizations per CDC schedule.

### Need for infectious disease screening

**STIs (chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis), tuberculosis, hepatitis C, HIV, zika, toxoplasmosis**

Address each according to CDC recommendations:
- Screen based on age and risk
- HIV test (once and if at risk)

Counsel regarding travel restrictions.

Caution against changing kitty litter.

### Exposure to environmental toxins

**Plastics with bisphenol-A (BPA), lead paint, asbestos, pesticides (agriculture), organic solvents and heavy metals (manufacturing), solvents (dry cleaning), organics and radiation (health care)**

Explore alternatives to toxic exposure or refer to occupational medicine programs if exposure is concerning.

### Alcohol, nicotine, and illegal drug use

*I’d like to ask you a few questions to help give you better medical care. In the past year, how often have you…*

- Used alcohol? [≥5 drinks a day for men; ≥4 drinks a day for women is considered heavy drinking]
- Used tobacco products?
- Used prescription drugs for non-medical reasons?
- Used illegal drugs?"  

Counsel that no amount of alcohol is considered safe and that using tobacco products, prescription drugs for non-medical reasons, and illegal drugs during pregnancy can result in serious adverse outcomes.

If abuse or dependence, refer for treatment prior to pregnancy.

### Intimate partner violence

*I talk to all of my patients about safe and healthy relationships because it can have such a large impact on your health. Has your partner ever…*

- Threatened you or made you feel afraid?
- Hit, choked, or physically hurt you?
- Forced you to do something sexually that you did not want to do, or refused your request to use condoms?

Respond supportively. For example:
- “No one deserves to be treated that way.”
- “It’s not your fault.”
- “There are resources that can help. I can connect you today.”

If client is in immediate danger, get help.

Know local referral sites for IPV services.

Understand legal obligations for mandatory reporting.

### Nutrition and physical activity

- Body mass index (BMI) <18 or >25
- Diet of proteins, vegetables, fruits, and whole grains
- Level and frequency of physical activity

Advise that high or low BMI is associated with infertility and pregnancy complications.

Encourage eating a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, protein and whole grains. (Consider a multivitamin.)

Recommend at least 30 min of moderate physical activity per day.

### REFERENCES


FPNTC is supported by the Office of Population Affairs of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services FPTPA006028-01-00. The information presented does not necessarily represent the views of OPA, DHHS, or FPNTC member organizations.