

Your Sexual Health



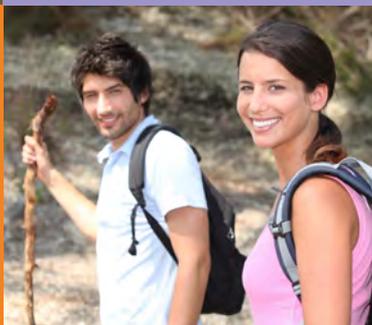
Relationships



Birth Control



STIs



Pregnancy



The more you know about your reproductive and sexual health, the more likely you are to make healthy choices. Positive and respectful relationships are important to your sexual well-being. In the following pages, you will find information about birth control, pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. This booklet is not a substitute for the advice of a health care professional; it is very important to talk to your health care provider about any questions you may have about your sexual health. To learn more about how to talk to your partner, friends, family and health care provider about sexual health and well-being, visit www.beforeplay.org/.

What is family planning?

Family planning means deciding if and when you want to have a child, whether you have already had a baby or not. Preventing an unintended pregnancy or planning the right time to have a baby will put you in control of your sexual health. Family planning lets you:

- Avoid a pregnancy you don't want
- Have a healthy, planned pregnancy only when you are ready to be a parent
- Have children only when you and your partner are ready
- Decrease stress in your sexual relationships
- Reach your education and career goals by avoiding an unintended pregnancy



What are family planning clinics?

Family planning clinics offer confidential services to protect your sexual health and well-being, including:

- Counseling on the best method of birth control for you
- Pregnancy tests and referrals to health care providers
- Sexual health exams
- Pap tests (a screening for cervical cancer)
- Tests for sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Tips on planning a healthy pregnancy
- Information on infertility and referral to a health care provider if needed

A physical exam is not required to start using most birth control methods.



How much do family planning services cost?

Many family planning clinics offer birth control, STI testing and other services free or at a low-cost depending on how much money you earn.

Where can I find a family planning clinic?

To find a clinic that offers free or low-cost services, use the clinic locator at www.beforeplay.org and look for the low-cost flag.

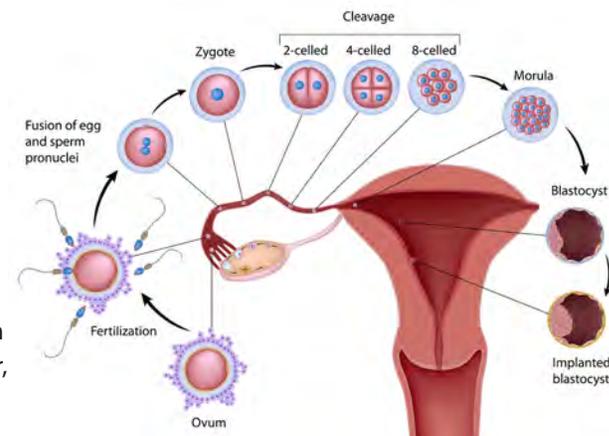
What happens at a family planning visit?

- You will be asked to fill out some papers, including your health history, income and family size.
- Clinic staff will talk to you about what you need and give you helpful information about your health
- You may have a physical exam
- You may have a lab test



How does pregnancy happen?

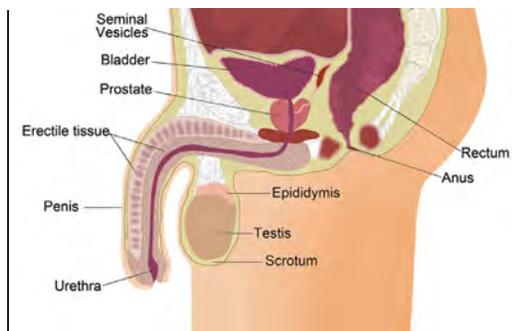
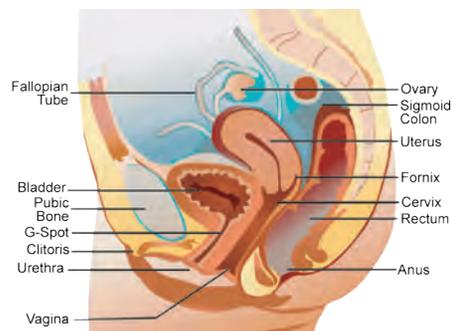
Once you reach puberty, an egg is released from the ovary once a month—a process called ovulation. The egg travels from the ovary to the uterus through the fallopian tube. If you have unprotected sex during ovulation, or even a few days before or after, the sperm can fertilize the egg and result in a pregnancy. If fertilization does not occur within a day or two of ovulation, your body will shed the egg and the lining of the uterus when you have your period. This process, called menstruation, usually happens about two weeks after ovulation.



Everyone's body is different. It is possible to get pregnant during your period, while breastfeeding, if you have never had sex before or just had a baby.

When you reach puberty, sex organs begin to produce sperm. Sperm are the cells that fertilize an egg. Once sperm are ejaculated they can live for about 48–72 hours—that's three days!

It's important to talk with your partner about family planning and share the responsibility. You can decide together what the best choices are for each of you. If you need help starting the conversation, check out conversation starters and tips on how to talk to your partner at <http://www.beforeplay.org/get-talking/>.



What is emergency contraception?

If you have had unprotected sex or you make a mistake using your birth control, emergency contraception helps lower your chances of getting pregnant.



What types of emergency contraception are available?

You can either take emergency contraception in pill form or by getting a copper IUD inserted. Ask your health care provider about how effective these options are and about possible side effects.

When can I use emergency contraception?

Emergency contraceptive may be effective up to 120 hours after having unprotected sex. **For best results, it should be used as soon as possible.**

Where can I get emergency contraception?

You can get emergency contraception at most family planning clinics.

You can purchase emergency contraception pills over the counter at most pharmacies.



What are Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)?

STIs are infections passed to a sexual partner during vaginal, anal, or oral sex. Having an STI can increase a person's risk of getting or spreading HIV.

To learn more about STIs symptoms, testing and treatment, go to www.beforeplay.org/stds/.

How do I know if I have an STI?

You must get tested to find out if you have an STI. Many times, you can't feel or see an STI, so you don't know if you have one. Many people have STIs without knowing it, so it is important for you and your partner to get tested.

Chlamydia and gonorrhea tests can be done using a urine specimen or by swabbing your vagina—you don't need an exam for these tests.

Where can I get tested?

Family planning clinics can test for many STIs. You can also visit an STI clinic or your health care provider. If you test positive for an STI, your health care provider can give you information about treatment.

How can I protect myself and my partner from STIs?

- Practice abstinence or limit the number of sexual partners you have.
- Use condoms every time you have sex.
- Make sure you and your partner get tested and, if needed, treated.
- You can get vaccinations for HPV (up through 26 years old) and Hepatitis B.



Sexually Transmitted Infections

Infection	Symptoms	Complications	Effect on pregnancy	Treatment
Chlamydia	Usually no or mild symptoms or: Discharge, burning, pelvic pain, bleeding between periods.	Pelvic infection. Damage to fallopian tubes, which can cause infertility, ectopic pregnancy.	Can lead to premature delivery. Infection can be passed to the baby during delivery and cause eye or lung infections in the baby.	Antibiotic treatment.
Gonorrhea	No or mild symptoms or burning, pain, discharge between periods.	Pelvic infection. Damage to fallopian tubes, which can cause infertility, ectopic pregnancy. Infection in testicles. If not treated, it can spread to blood or joints—this can be life threatening.	Infection can be passed to the baby during delivery.	Antibiotic treatment.
Genital Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)	Most people do not have symptoms. Some may get genital warts.	Cervical cancer and less common cancers of the vulva, vagina, penis, anus and throat.	On rare occasions, HPV can be passed to the baby during delivery, causing warts in the baby's throat.	There is no treatment for the virus itself. Warts can be removed. Routine Pap tests and follow up can help prevent cervical cancer. Ask about the vaccine to prevent HPV infection.
Molluscum Contagiosum Virus	Small fleshy bumps on the thighs, buttocks, groin and lower abdomen. Bumps can itch.	People with HIV/AIDS may have a worse outbreak.		Bumps will go away on their own or can be removed.
Bacterial Vaginosis (BV)	No symptoms or vaginal discharge with odor, burning and itching.	Can sometimes cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID). Can increase susceptibility to HIV and passing HIV to a sex partner.	May increase the risk of an early delivery or low birth weight baby.	Antibiotic treatment.
Genital Herpes (HSV)	No symptoms or painful blisters around genitals, rectum or mouth (outbreak). Flu like symptoms may occur with the first outbreak.	Can be spread to other parts of the body if a person touches the sores and then touches another part of the body.	Can sometimes lead to miscarriage or early birth. Can be passed to baby during delivery and cause a serious life threatening infection in the baby.	There is no treatment to cure herpes. Antiviral medications can prevent or shorten outbreaks.
Trichomoniasis	No symptoms or itching, burning and discharge.	May increase the risk of getting other STIs.	May cause early delivery or low birth weight baby.	Antibiotic treatment.

Infection	Symptoms	Complications	Effect on pregnancy	Treatment
Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). Infection of uterus, fallopian tubes, and other pelvic organs	Mild to severe lower abdominal pain. Abnormal vaginal discharge, painful intercourse, irregular bleeding, fever.	Damages fallopian tubes, which can cause infertility and risk for tubal pregnancy. Chronic pelvic pain.	Serious infection for the pregnant person and baby.	Antibiotic treatment. Serious PID may require hospitalization.
Hepatitis B	A contagious liver disease with symptoms from mild illness lasting a few weeks to a serious, lifelong illness.	Severe liver disease.	Can pass infection on to baby.	There is no treatment that cures the virus that causes Hepatitis B. Ask about the vaccine to prevent Hepatitis B.
Syphilis	First stage symptoms: single or multiple painless sores where Syphilis entered the body. If not treated, second stage symptoms include skin rashes and/or sores in the mouth, vagina or anus. These symptoms go away on their own, but the infection does not go away without treatment.	Serious health problems affecting internal organs such as the brain, heart, liver and bones if not treated. Can lead to death.	Can infect baby in the womb and cause serious problems or death.	Antibiotic treatment.
Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)	May have no symptoms early in the infection. A few weeks to three months after getting HIV, symptoms can include flu like symptoms such as fever and chills, rash, night sweats, muscle aches, sore throat and swollen lymph nodes. Symptoms may go away and not recur for 10 years or longer.	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) symptoms include fatigue, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, fever, chills, night sweats, wasting syndrome. Can lead to death.	HIV can be passed to the baby during pregnancy, vaginal delivery and breastfeeding. The risk of transmitting the infection to the baby can be reduced with antiviral drug treatment, cesarean section and not breastfeeding.	There is no treatment that cures the virus that causes HIV/AIDS. There are drugs available to manage the infection.

Where can I find out more about STIs ?

www.cdc.gov/std/

www.beforeplay.org/stds/

Pelvic Exams and Pap tests

Pap tests check the cells from the cervix. The test can show changes that may be signs of pre-cancer or cancer of the cervix. HPV, a common viral infection, causes most cervical pre-cancers or cancers. The test can find a problem early, when it is easiest to cure. You can get a Pap test at a family planning clinic. A Pap test is done as part of a pelvic exam. You should get routine Pap tests every three years starting at age 21 years. If you are 30 years and older, you have the option of a Pap test every 5 years if a HPV test is done at the same time.

Breast exam

A breast exam checks for signs of cancer, such as a lump, in the breast. Your health care provider can tell you how often you should have a breast exam at the clinic.

You should be aware of changes in your breasts and see your health care provider for changes such as a lump, redness or dimpling of the skin, abnormal nipple discharge, or nipple retraction (your nipple turns inward). You may wish to examine your own breasts. Your health care provider can explain the benefits and limits of breast self-exam and how to do a breast self-exam.

A mammogram is an x-ray of the breast to look for cancer. Your health care provider can explain the benefits and limits of a mammogram and what age you should start to have regular screening mammograms.



Testicular exam

A testicular exam may be done as part of a routine exam to check for signs of cancer (usually a lump) in the testicles. If you find a lump in your testicles, it's important to see a health care provider right away.

Planning for Pregnancy

Do you want to get pregnant now or in the future?

You, your partner, and your baby can benefit from good health before pregnancy. Healthy habits can help you have a healthy pregnancy and healthy baby. To learn more about planning for pregnancy, visit:

www.beforeplay.org/overview/pregnancy/
www.cdc.gov/preconception/overview.html

Tips for a healthy you and a healthy baby

You and your partner should try to reach and maintain a healthy weight before and during pregnancy.

Immunizations

Make sure you are up to date on immunizations before pregnancy. A flu shot is recommended for everyone age 6 months and older every year. Be sure your other shots are up to date also, so you do not get infections such as rubella (German measles), chickenpox and whooping cough. Certain vaccines such as measles, mumps and rubella (MMR), chickenpox and the nasal spray flu vaccine are live vaccines and should not be given during pregnancy. If you get these vaccines, ask how long to wait before getting pregnant.





Healthy Eating

Go to the Choose My Plate web site for tips on healthy eating: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>. Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Drink water instead of sugary drinks. Limit junk food and fast food.

Folic acid is a B vitamin that can help prevent birth defects of a baby's spine and brain. Get 400 micrograms of folic acid every day, even if you are not planning a pregnancy any time soon. The easiest way to get folic acid is to take a multivitamin each day. Good food choices include whole grain breads and cereals, leafy green vegetables, beans and citrus fruits like oranges or grapefruits.

Physical Activity

Aerobic activity, such as brisk walking or running, and strength training exercises are important to your health. You can break your activity up into smaller chunks of time during the day, as long as it is a moderate or vigorous effort for at least 10 minutes at a time.

Go to the CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/index.html> or the American Heart Association at http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/PhysicalActivity/Physical-Activity_UCM_001080_SubHomePage.jsp for information on physical activity.



Tobacco, alcohol & drugs

Tobacco, alcohol and street drugs are harmful during pregnancy. Stop using these substances before a pregnancy. There is help available if you are having a hard time quitting smoking, drinking or doing drugs. Your health care provider can give you information and resources in your community.

Go to <http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/alcohol-use.htm>, <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/>, <http://www.drugabuse.gov/>, <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/> or call 1-800-662-4357, <https://www.coquitline.org/> or call 1-800-784-8669 for more information.

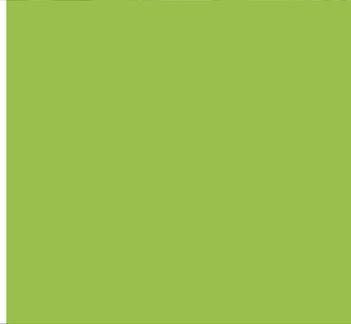
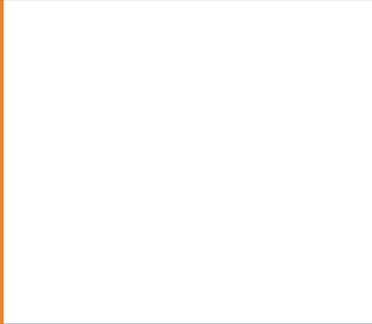
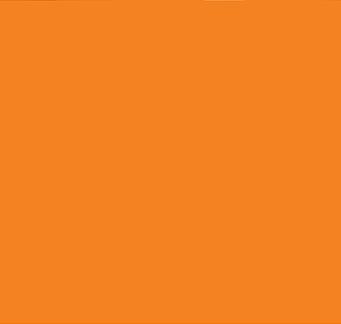
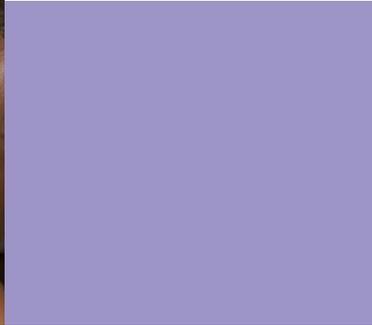
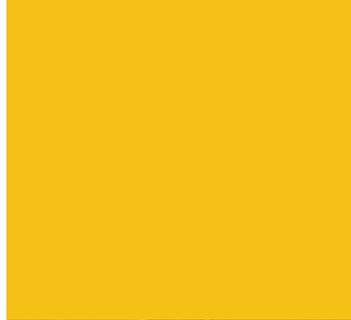
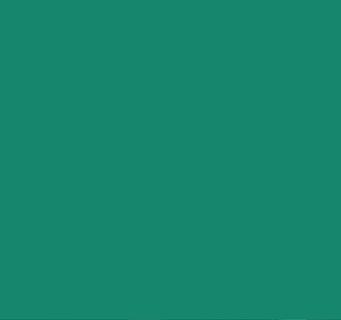
Abuse & violence

Get help for violence. If someone is violent against you or you are violent toward others, there is help available in your community. Talk to your health care provider.

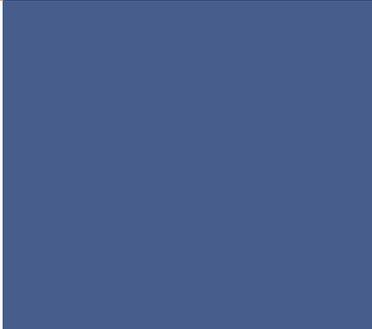
Information can also be found at <http://www.ccadv.org/>, <http://www.loveisrespect.org> or <http://www.thehotline.org>.

The content in this booklet is based on information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other trusted resources.

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Title X clinics comply with applicable Federal civil rights laws and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.



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