Healthy Women. Healthy Babies.

You don't have to be perfect—just healthy!

Watch your weight: If you're overweight, it can lead to serious health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure, which can harm your baby's health as well. And both overweight and underweight are associated with premature births.

Take care of yourself:

Do:

- Eat a balanced diet
- Exercise
- Have a routine physical and dental exam each year
- Keep your immunizations current
- Plan for pregnancy and practice safe sex
- Wash your hands
- Get help for depression or other mental health concerns

Don't:

- Smoke
- Abuse alcohol
- Take illegal street or prescription drugs

For more information contact:

Fairfax County Health Department
10777 Main Street, Suite 203
Fairfax, Virginia 22030
Phone: 703-246-2411

Or visit us online at:
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/pcs

Important Resources

Women's Health information from The Centers for Disease Control
www.cdc.gov/women

Information to help you quit smoking from The Centers for Disease Control
www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/index.htm

The March of Dimes Homepage
www.marchofdimes.com

Women's Health information from The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
www.4women.gov

Produced by the Fairfax County Health Department and the Fairfax County Saving Babies Coalition

Giving birth to a child can be one of the best experiences of your life. Here's how you can help make sure it is.

march of dimes®
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/pcs

Are you ready for the unexpected?

Even if you aren't planning a pregnancy—and especially if you are—you need to be prepared to bring a healthy baby into this world.

You may not be thinking of getting pregnant anytime soon, but consider this:

- Up to half of all pregnancies are unplanned.
- Many babies' health problems start even before the mother knows she is pregnant.

That's why all women should be prepared for pregnancy as soon as they reach childbearing age.

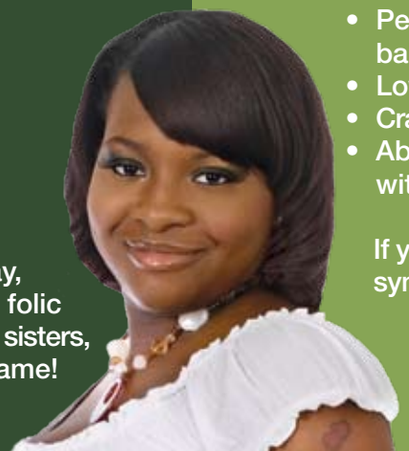
First, get your folic acid.

All women, pregnant or not, need folic acid every day. Folic acid reduces the risk of some birth defects by 80 percent.

Where to find folic acid:

- Most daily vitamin supplements (400 mcg/day)
- Prenatal vitamins
- Foods such as:
- Green leafy vegetables
- Peas and beans
- Breads, cereals, pastas, and rice fortified with folic acid

To be sure you get enough every day, combine a vitamin supplement with folic acid-rich foods—and tell your friends, sisters, cousins, and coworkers to do the same!



Prevent Prematurity and Pre-Term Labor

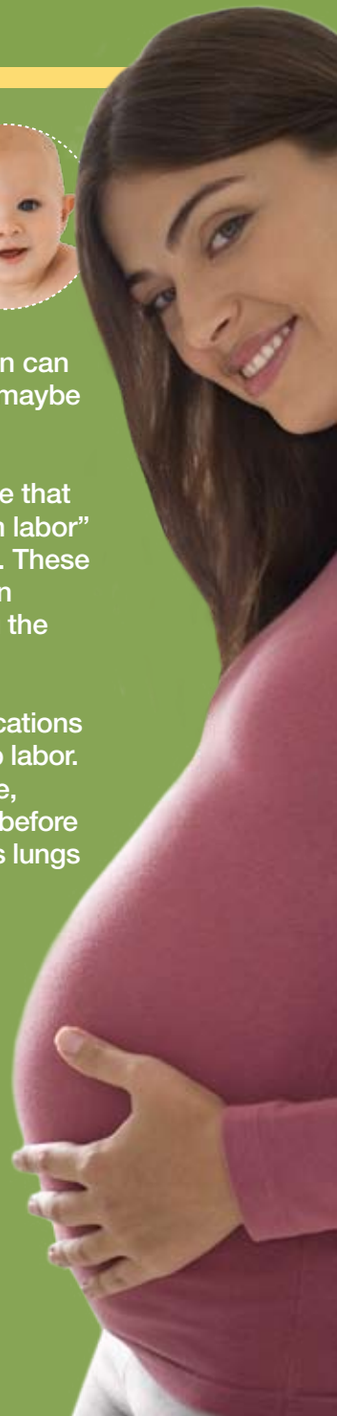
Prematurity is the greatest threat to your baby's health. Sadly, premature labor and birth is the leading cause of late-term loss and early infant death in Fairfax County, and even in the long term, premature babies have a higher risk of severe medical problems and developmental delays. Pre-term labor can endanger your health too.

To prevent and treat premature labor, you need medical care both before and during pregnancy. Your doctor should tell you about the signs and symptoms of premature labor, including:

- Contractions (when your abdomen tightens like a fist) at least every 10 minutes
- Change in vaginal discharge (leaking fluid or bleeding from your vagina)
- Pelvic pressure (the feeling that your baby is pushing down)
- Low, dull backache
- Cramps that feel like menstrual cramps
- Abdominal cramps with or without diarrhea

If you or someone you know has these symptoms, call your doctor right away!

Immediate medical attention can save your baby's life—and maybe even your own.

Tell the person on the phone that you have "signs of pre-term labor" and then list the symptoms. These words will get their attention quickly so they can get you the help you need.

If taken soon enough, medications can sometimes slow or stop labor. Even if the birth is premature, some drugs given 24 hours before the birth can help the baby's lungs and brain mature.