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. All women can make a reproductive life plan, even if they don’t want to be pregnant in the future. There are many kinds of 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, relationships 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. Talk to your VA doctor or healthcare provider about what steps you can take to be as healthy as possible before pregnancy.

• Your plan doesn’t have to be set in stone—it can change. Life is unpredictable! So, make a plan today, give it some thought each year, and expect to make changes along the way.

• 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.

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

• 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?

• Is it possible I could ever change my mind and want to have children one day?

• 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?
Questions to Get Started if You Do Want to Have Children

- 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 relationships, home, school, work, finances, or other parts of my life to get ready to have children?
- What, if anything, do I want to change about my health to get ready to have children?
  - 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 medicines (prescription and over-the-counter) and herbal/natural supplements am I currently taking and how could they affect pregnancy? Which should I continue before and during pregnancy?
- Are there hazards in my home or workplace that could affect a pregnancy? How can these be addressed?

Take Action

Once you have a plan, take action. For example, if you decide to use birth control, talk to your VA provider about finding the best method for you and then make sure to use it consistently and correctly. Or, if you decide to quit smoking or lose weight, talk to your VA health care provider about resources that can help.

Remember that your plan doesn’t have to be set in stone. Make a plan today, give it some thought each year, and expect to make changes along the way.
Examples of Plans

The following are some examples of reproductive life plans:

- I’ve decided that I don’t want to have any children. I will find a good birth control method. Even thought I don’t want to have children, I will talk to my doctor about how I can be healthier.

- I am in a good relationship and I’m pretty healthy. I want to stop using birth control and try to get pregnant. I’m going to talk to my doctor to find out what I can do to have a healthy pregnancy.

- I’ve had two kids only a year apart. Both times, it just happened. I want to have another kid before I turn 36, but I want to wait at least 2 years. I’ll talk to my doctor about birth control. This time, I’m going to make sure I get pregnant only when I want to.

- My partner and I are talking about getting pregnant, but I take a lot of medicines for my other health issues. I am going to make an appointment to discuss my medicines and health issues with my doctor. I want me and my baby to have a healthy pregnancy.

- My partner and I are ready to have a child, and we need to use a sperm bank or fertility service to get pregnant. I’ll make sure I’m in good health and our finances are stable before we start.

My Plan

__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________
If you are considering becoming pregnant now or in the future, talk with your VA provider 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ask your provider about:</th>
<th>Write down what your care team says here:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family planning and birth control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking folic acid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The importance of nutrition and being at a healthy weight before pregnancy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical problems, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, thyroid problems or seizures.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health conditions, such as depression, PTSD or anxiety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medications you are taking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quitting smoking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaccines and screenings you might need, such as tests for sexually transmitted infections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social support concerns, including domestic violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems you’ve had with prior pregnancies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental hazards in your home or workplace that could affect your pregnancy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your partner’s health and family history</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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](http://www.womenshealth.va.gov)
Phone (VA healthcare benefits):  1-877-222-8387

**Vet Center Locator**
Web:  [www2.va.gov/directory/guide/vetcenter_flsh.asp](http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/vetcenter_flsh.asp)
Phone (VA healthcare benefits):  1-877-222-8387

**Veteran’s Crisis Line**
Web:  [www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net)
Phone:  1-800-273-8255, press 1

**National Center for PTSD**
Web:  [www ptsd va gov](http://www ptsd va gov)
PTSD Information Voice Mail:  1-802-296-6300

**Office of Women’s Health**
[www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov)
Phone:  1-800-994-9662

**U.S. Department of Agriculture**
Web:  [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)
Phone:  888-779-7264

**CDC - Pregnancy Homepage**
Web:  [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/pregnancygateway/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/pregnancygateway/index.html)
Phone (headquarters):  1-800-232-4636

**CDC - BMI Calculator**
Web:  [www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/index.html)
Phone:  1-800-232-4636

**CDC - Vaccination and Immunizations**
Web:  [www.cdc.gov/vaccines](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines)
Phone:  1-800-232-4636

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**
Web:  [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)
Phone:  1-877-726-4727

**CDC - Contraception Information**
Web:  [www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/unintendedpregnancy/contraception.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/unintendedpregnancy/contraception.htm)
Phone (headquarters):  1-800-232-4636
Women's Health Program at VA Pittsburgh

Since 2000, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System Women’s Health Program has continued to be a National Center of Excellence in Women’s Health because of our outstanding record of health care to women Veterans.

Providers are specifically trained in women’s health issues to address both acute and chronic needs. Each Veteran is an integral part of an individual Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) that will oversee all health care.

Services we can provide

Reproductive Health Care
- Cervical Cancer Screening
- Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)
- Menstrual Health
- Infertility Counseling
- Maternity Care
- Menopause
- Urinary Treatment for Incontinence (Diagnostic Testing, Biofeedback, Medical Therapies and Surgery)
- Hormone Replacement
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases
- Pregnancy Care
- Lactation Care
- Contraception
- Intrauterine Devices (IUD)
- Implants
- Tubal Ligations
- Birth Control Pills
- Vaginal Rings
- Condoms
- Morning after Pill

Breast Health
- Breast Awareness
- Mammography at University Drive and Fee Basis
- Breast Reduction Mammoplasty

Chronic Disease Management

Weight Management
- MOVE
- Bariatric Surgery
- Nutritional Counseling

Osteoporosis Screening and Treatment
- Dexa Scan at University Drive
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Arthritis
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Migraine Headaches
- Pain management

Tobacco, Substance Abuse, Alcohol, Addiction

Behavioral Health
- Anger Management
- Eating Disorders
- Domestic Violence
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- PTSD

Support Services
- Caregiver Support
- Spiritual Support
- Housing Support
- Employment
- Pharmacy
- Eye Care
- Hearing
- Respite Care
- Podiatry
- Domiciliary
- Fisher House
Clinic Locations

**University Drive Campus**
University Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15240

**H.J. Heinz Campus**
1010 Delafield Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15215

412-822-3000
www.womenshealth.va.gov

**Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC)**

- **Beaver County CBOC**
  90 Wagner Rd
  Monaca, PA 15061
  724-709-6005

- **Belmont County CBOC**
  103 Plaza Dr. Suite A
  St. Clairsville, OH 43950
  724-695-9321

- **Fayette County CBOC**
  635 Pittsburgh Road
  Uniontown, PA 15401
  724-439-4990

- **Washington CBOC**
  1500 West Chestnut Street
  Washington, PA 15301
  724-250-7790

- **Westmoreland CBOC**
  5274 Rt. 30 East, Suite 10
  Greensburg, PA 15601
  724-216-0317

Notes

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________
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
- “Preconception Visit Print and Go Guide” - www.womenshealth.gov