



Preventive Care for Women

When women receive regular preventive care before they get pregnant, they are more likely to have healthy pregnancies and give birth to healthy babies. Making this care available without cost sharing makes it easier for women to get the care they need, when they need it. The most important services for pregnant women and women of childbearing age include the following:

Annual well woman visits provide regular, age-appropriate care to women whether or not they are planning to get pregnant. Many of the services and screenings received during well woman checkups can improve future pregnancy health. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends that women have annual check-ups to screen for health risks and stay healthy.

Tobacco cessation services and counseling are vitally important to help women stop smoking or using other tobacco products before they get pregnant. For pregnant women, smoking can lead to adverse maternal, fetal, and infant outcomes such as preterm birth, low birthweight, and sudden infant death.

Birth spacing refers to the time from one child's birth until the next pregnancy. Pregnancies that start less than 18 months after birth are connected with delayed prenatal care and adverse birth outcomes including preterm birth, low birthweight, and health problems associated with being born too soon or too small. Access to services that promote appropriate birth spacing, such as FDA-approved contraceptives and related counseling without cost sharing, can reduce the risk for poor birth outcomes.

Adult immunizations help women stay healthy. For example, the flu shot is safe and recommended for all women, including those who are pregnant, and should be available without cost sharing.

All U.S. women need access to preventive services to help them get healthy before and between pregnancies. **The March of Dimes urges policymakers to ensure that preventive care for all women is a required benefit in all health plans, and that these services are available without cost sharing.**