



*Plan*

*V* *our*

*Health*

*Live*  
*your* *Life*



Between school, sports, and friends, you have a lot going on in your life. It's exciting and new and most of all, fun! And probably the last thing you want to do is sit down and make *A Plan*. But here's the deal: You need some idea of how you want your life to unfold. For instance, do you want to go to college? What kind of career do you want? And here's a big one: Do you want to be a mom or a dad someday? That's why we're calling this your Reproductive Life Plan—because becoming a parent before you've *planned* to can really interfere with all the fun.

**What is a Reproductive Life Plan (RLP)?**

*An RLP is about deciding when (or if) you want to become a parent, even if being a mom or a dad is years away for you. Your plan includes things like college, a career, and goals to improve your personal health.*

*Your RLP might change, but the important thing is to start thinking about it now. Because 280,000 girls under age 18 become pregnant each year, and 87% of them didn't plan on it!*

**YOUR FUTURE: ASTRONAUT? SENATOR? PARENT?**

It takes a lot of work, commitment and energy to be a parent. Think about how being a dad or a mom will fit in with your other goals, then answer the following questions:

*Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years? The next 10 years? Married? Single? In school? Working? Living in a home or apartment? Something else?*

*How much education do you want? Do you want to go to college? Where? When?*

*Do you plan on having a career? What career do you want? Where do you want to work?*

*Do you want to be a dad or a mom someday?*  
 YES  NO

**If you answered YES:**

*How old do you want to be when you have your first baby?*  
 \_\_\_\_\_

*How many kids do you want?* \_\_\_\_\_

*How close in age do you want your kids to be?* \_\_\_\_\_

*How will being a mom or dad affect your ability to reach your other goals?* \_\_\_\_\_

Even if you don't want to be a parent, it's important to have an RLP. It can keep you on track to stay healthy so you can reach the rest of your goals. Here are some other things to consider in your RLP.

**PERSONAL HABITS: ARE YOU A CLEAN MACHINE?**

Some behaviors can increase your health risks and affect the health of your future babies. That's why they should be avoided starting now. Check any of the following behaviors that apply to you.

- Smoking*
- Underage drinking (younger than 21) or binge drinking (5 or more drinks in one sitting) at any age*
- Using illegal drugs (marijuana, methamphetamine, cocaine, crack, etc.)*
- Overeating or unhealthy dieting*

If you need help quitting any of these habits talk to an adult you trust. Together you can find information or a program to help you.

**GET YOUR PLAN ON.**

Most people end up having at least one baby, even if they don't plan on it. The best thing you can do for yourself, and for the health of any future babies, is to start living a healthy life *now*, long before you become pregnant.

How many healthy lifestyle choices have you made already? Check all that apply:

- Eating plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole grains*
- Exercising regularly: Remember, you don't have to go to a gym to exercise. You can take a walk, go for a hike, or ride your bike. You should exercise at least 150 minutes a week, which is about 25 minutes a day. And it should be fun!*
- Taking a multivitamin that contains folic acid every day is very important for women, starting in their teen years.*



Folic acid is a nutrient that helps to prevent certain birth defects, but it needs to be taken before a woman gets pregnant as well as during pregnancy. Most multivitamins contain the 400 micrograms of folic acid that women need. Be sure to check the label.

- Getting regular checkups with your doctor and your dentist
- Getting enough sleep. Sleep recharges your brain and your body and helps fight diseases like obesity, diabetes, and depression. Most teens need about 8½ hours of sleep a night.



## BE HEALTHY (FOR NOW & FOR LATER).

Your health will affect the health of your future babies, so make sure any problems are under control *before* you ever get pregnant. Do you have health problems now? Check any that apply.

- *Thyroid problems*
- *Underweight or overweight*
- *Diabetes*
- *Asthma*
- *Mental illness, including depression*
- *Heart defect*
- *Any infections: Which one(s)? \_\_\_\_\_*
- *Any diseases: Which one(s)? \_\_\_\_\_*
- *Other \_\_\_\_\_*



## IS AUNT FLOW IN TOWN?

The healthiest pregnancy is a *planned* pregnancy. When you visit with your doctor, don't be afraid to ask questions about how to prepare for a healthy pregnancy even if you don't plan to have a baby for a long time. When you *are* ready to have a baby, see your health care provider at least 3 months ahead of time to make sure you're in good health. Among other things, you'll probably be asked about your periods. Did you know that half of all women don't have regular periods? What else do you know about reproduction and your period?

*Do you track your periods using a calendar?*

— YES — NO

*How far apart are your periods?* \_\_\_\_\_

*How long do they last?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Is your flow heavy or light?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Do you have painful periods (cramps, bloating, etc.)?*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Is there someone you can talk to about reproductive (or sexual) issues? — YES — NO*

*If so, who?* \_\_\_\_\_

## VACCINES/IMMUNIZATIONS: PLAN TO ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVE.

Vaccines (or immunizations) help *protect* you from certain diseases and illnesses, like the ones listed on the next page. When you're protected, your antibodies are passed on to your future babies, protecting them for the first few months after birth. After that, a baby needs his or her own vaccines. The important thing is to make sure your vaccines are up to date *before* you get pregnant.





**Have you been vaccinated for the following?**

- Tetanus (Td or Tdap)
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Varicella (Chickenpox)
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella
- Inactivated Polio Virus (IPV)
- Meningococcal meningitis

And don't forget booster shots. You need a tetanus booster every 10 years, and your health care provider might recommend a one-time booster against pertussis, too. You should also get a flu shot every year. Your doctor will keep track of what you've had and what you need, so be sure to ask.

**WHAT'S IN YOUR MEDICINE CABINET?**

Always make sure your health care provider knows what prescription drugs *and* over-the-counter drugs you are taking. It's important for your health and for the future, because some medications are not safe to take during pregnancy.

*What medications are you taking?*

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**FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY: WHAT KIND OF GENES ARE YOU WEARING?**

Health problems can often run in families, so it's important to know your family history for yourself and your children if and when you have them. The Surgeon General has an excellent website to help you create a family health history at:

[www.hhs.gov/familyhistory/](http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory/).

**Has anyone in your family had any of the following?**

- A baby born too early (premature baby)
- A baby who weighed less than 5½ pounds (low-birth-weight baby)

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- Preeclampsia/eclampsia (toxemia, high blood pressure, seizures)
  - Diabetes that started during pregnancy (gestational diabetes)
  - Problems getting pregnant
  - Two or more miscarriages
  - Stillborn baby (a baby born dead)
  - A baby born with a birth defect. If so, what kind of defect?
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Talk with your family first and find out what health problems they have, if any. Then talk to your health care provider about the ways you can lower your risk for the same conditions.

- Depression
- Asthma
- Obesity
- Heart disease
- Heart defect
- Stroke
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs): PLAN A-1: AVOID THEM.**

Nine million teens and young adults (aged 15-24) get a sexually transmitted infection, or STI, every year! STIs can lead to general health problems, infertility, or serious pregnancy problems. Your RLP should always include getting screened for STIs, and that includes HIV/AIDS.



## PERSONAL SAFETY: IT'S NO LAUGHING MATTER.

It's sad but it's true: Teenagers and adults are sometimes abused by people close to them. Abuse is NEVER okay. It creates an unsafe living environment for you and any future children.

### Are any of the following happening to you?

- *Is there anybody in your life who physically hurts you (pushes, hits, slaps, kicks, chokes, etc.)?*
- *Does someone in your life say mean or hurtful things to you, a lot?*
- *Are you ever forced to take part in any sexual activities (including touching) that make you feel uncomfortable?*

*If you answered YES to any of these questions, there is help available. Please call 1-800-897-LINK (5465) for help.*



## EMOTIONAL HEALTH: WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

The way you handle stressful situations can affect your health as well as the health and safety of your future children. Ask yourself the following questions to learn more about your own emotional health.

*When you feel sad, do you usually bounce back quickly, or do you stay sad for a long time (2 weeks or more)?*

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*How often do you find yourself feeling overly nervous, anxious, or worried? What makes you feel that way?*

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*What do you do when you're in a stressful situation, or feel overwhelmed? \_\_\_\_\_*

*Do you get angry easily? What makes you angry?*

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*When you get angry, how do you calm yourself down?*

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*How do you generally treat people who are close to you?*

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*What do you do if someone says or does something you don't like? \_\_\_\_\_*

Is there any part of your emotional health you don't feel good about? After all, emotions are complicated, and many people need help understanding them. If so, it's important to ask for help. **Don't be embarrassed!**

Talk to an adult you trust: a parent, a teacher, a principal. Help is always available, you only have to ask.

## FINANCIAL SECURITY/INSURANCE: WHAT'S YOUR PLAN OF ATTACK?

Life is already expensive, and having a baby will definitely add to the expense. It's a good idea to make a financial plan whether you plan to have kids someday or not. Think about the following as you plan for your future:

- *A place to live*
- *Money for groceries*
- *Transportation (car, bus, etc.)*
- *Health, dental, and auto insurance*
- *Money for your babies' basic needs*

Get ready for some financial reality—these are just some of the expenses you'll have during the first year of a baby's life. Most experts agree that a baby costs about \$10,000 in his or her first year alone.

- *Diapers \$5,000*
- *A stroller \$125.00*
- *A car seat \$100.00*
- *Bottles \$100.00*
- *A crib \$200.00*
- *Food for one year \$1,000*

And this doesn't even count clothes, sheets, soap, wipes, toys, etc.!



## “DAD” IS A VERY BIG WORD.

As a photographer Ann Geddes, said “Any man can be a father, but it takes someone special to be a dad.” And there’s a lot more to it than bringing home the bacon! Dads provide a sense of safety and support, and they introduce kids to all kinds of wonderful things throughout their lives. Moms are absolutely necessary, but where would we be without dads? Did you know that:

- Kids who grow up with an involved dad are less likely to use drugs and abuse alcohol.
- Kids who grow up with an involved dad are more likely to be well-adjusted teenagers and adults.
- Kids who grow up with an involved dad are less likely to break the law.

Take the time to put together your own RLP. It’s a great way to avoid unpleasant surprises, and gain more control over your future while you’re at it.

Please take our survey (at <http://health.utah.gov/rhp/survey/index.php?m=t>) and tell us what you think of this brochure.



### REFERENCES:

*Recommendations to Improve Preconception Health and Health Care – United States. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. April 21, 2006/Vol.55/No.RR06. Preconception Health and Care, 2006.*

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