

The exceptional group of obstetricians and gynecologists at Women's Care at Tufts Medical Center provide comprehensive services to women of all ages at different stages of their lives. Here's a list of the outstanding Ob/Gyns at Women's Care at Tufts Medical Center:

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You can reach them at
617-636-BABY.



Thinking About **Having a Baby?**

DECIDING TO HAVE A BABY is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. You may be thinking "what should I be doing to prepare myself?" The following are some helpful tips to get you ready for your journey through pregnancy.

Before trying to conceive, you should discuss your desire to have a baby with your primary care physician (PCP) or your gynecologist. Your PCP can discuss any special health issues you may currently have that should be managed now and during your pregnancy (such as diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, lupus and others). Both you and your baby's father should also discuss any inherited conditions either of you may have. Your physician may recommend some genetic counseling before conception.

What types of lifestyle changes do I need to make if I am thinking of having a baby or recently found out I am pregnant?

There are several lifestyle changes you can make before you become pregnant to make certain you are as healthy as possible for conception and pregnancy. Some changes to consider are:

- ▶ **Stop smoking.** Smoking not only decreases a woman's chance of getting pregnant, but smoking during pregnancy can result in a lower birth weight for the baby as well as additional health problems.
- ▶ **Eliminate alcohol consumption.** Some babies born to women who consume alcohol during their pregnancy are born with some form of mental retardation, learning disabilities and behavioral problems. Much like smoking, drinking alcohol may also reduce your ability to conceive.
- ▶ **Eat healthy and exercise.** Healthy eating habits and regular exercise can help you physically prepare yourself for pregnancy, childbirth and post-delivery activities. If you are currently overweight, your doctor may advise you to lose some weight before getting pregnant.
- ▶ **Taking a folic acid supplement** is very important for women who are thinking about getting pregnant. Folic acid helps protect your baby against neural tube defects such as spina bifida. In addition to a pill supplement, folic acid can also be found in foods such as dark green, leafy vegetables, broccoli and orange juice.
- ▶ **Limit your caffeine intake.** Caffeine is a stimulant that causes your blood vessels to constrict, increases your heart rate and elevates blood pressure. Caffeine can cross the placenta to your baby. As he/she is growing, your baby does not have the ability to metabolize the caffeine as quickly as you do and it can affect his/her developing cells. The March of Dimes advises women to limit their caffeine intake to less than 200 mg per day.

To put it in perspective, one 12 oz can of Coca Cola Classic has 34.5 mg, an 8 oz cup of coffee (drip) has 145 mg, a 12 oz can of Mountain Dew has 55 mg, an 8 oz can of Red Bull has 80 mg, a 12 oz Starbucks Tall coffee has 260 mg, and an 8 oz cup of brewed tea has 40 mg of caffeine.

Do I need to take any kind of medication or receive any shots if I am thinking about having a baby?

Make sure you have received all vaccinations before you get pregnant. Getting a Rubella vaccination to protect against German measles before getting pregnant is particularly important. If a pregnant woman gets German measles at any time during the first 16 weeks of pregnancy, the baby can develop severe congenital defects such as blindness, heart and brain abnormalities and deafness. Women who are already pregnant should not get the Rubella immunization because it contains the live measles virus. Those women should get a blood test to see if they are naturally immune to Rubella. If they are not naturally immune, they should avoid contact with others who currently have the disease or those who have been directly exposed to others who have it.

How do I know if I'm ready to have a baby?

Every child needs and deserves an unlimited supply of love and support, so it is of the utmost importance that both you and your partner are emotionally ready to have a baby.

Parents-to-be need to mentally prepare themselves for the demands of a new baby, particularly during the newborn phase when everything is brand new and unfamiliar. This unfamiliarity can often bring on feelings of inadequacy, stress and frustration. Caring for a new baby can interrupt times of intimacy and spontaneity that couples may have come accustomed to in their relationship. Discussing these possibilities before the baby arrives and then keeping the communication flowing between both parents after the baby arrives is key.

What if I am unsuccessful in my attempts to get pregnant? When should I go to a fertility specialist?

Healthy women under 30 years of age can usually achieve pregnancy within four to six months. For women over 30, it begins to take longer, and by age 40 years, it can take well over 12 months. Women under 35 with a regular menstrual cycle are advised to try getting pregnant for a year before seeking help from a fertility specialist. Women over 35 are traditionally advised to try for six months.

If the woman has irregular menstrual cycles, a history of gynecologic disease, has had a history of three or more miscarriages, or the man has known reproductive dysfunction, the couple should be evaluated with more urgency. Tufts Medical Center Reproductive Endocrinology specialists can be reached at 617-636-0053. □

We Look Forward to Meeting You

Choosing the right obstetrician is a personal and important decision; after all, you will be spending nine months together. Our obstetricians at Women's Care at Tufts Medical Center enjoy getting to know mothers-to-be and providing information and support every step of the way. We start by providing your first appointment within a week of your first call to us. We have male and female physicians, and physicians fluent in Vietnamese, Korean and French.

Your pregnancy is likely to be without complications, but should you or your baby need additional attention, it's reassuring to know that the OBs of Women's Care have ready access to high-risk maternity specialists and to expert neonatologists in Tufts Medical Center's highly respected Level-3 Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). All these experts are located right in the same buildings, just steps from each other, so everything you might ever need is right here for you and your new family, just in case. All of our ultrasounds are Level II ultrasounds, which are as in-depth as possible.

Our exceptional, patient and compassionate lactation consultants are also here for every new mother, helping you and your baby adjust to breastfeeding.

You can make an appointment with us if you are already pregnant or if you are just thinking about becoming pregnant. Call us at 617-636-BABY or email obgyn@tuftsmedicalcenter.org.

Locations:

Downtown Boston:

Tufts Medical Center
South Building, 2nd Floor
800 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02111

Quincy:

30 Beach Street, Quincy, MA 02170

Our physicians also see patients at area Health Centers. To schedule an appointment with Dr. Hong-Thao Thieu or Dr. Brian Bond at **Neponset Health Center** in Dorchester, call 617-282-3200. To schedule an appointment with Dr. Alissa Dangel at the **South Boston Health Center**, call 617-269-7500.