

# Road to WELLfluent™

Embrace better health.

## Commit to Healthy Choices to Help Prevent Birth Defects

We know that not all birth defects can be prevented. But, we also know that women can increase their chances of having a healthy baby by managing health conditions and adopting healthy behaviors before becoming pregnant. Make a pact, a commitment to yourself, to get healthy before and during pregnancy by actively trying to plan ahead, avoid harmful substances, choose a healthy lifestyle, and talk with your healthcare provider.

### **Plan ahead.**

Get 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day.

Folic acid is a B vitamin. If a woman has enough folic acid in her body at least one month before and during pregnancy, it can help prevent major birth defects of the developing brain and spine (anencephaly and spina bifida).

### **See a healthcare professional regularly.**

A woman should be sure to see her doctor when planning a pregnancy and start prenatal care as soon as she thinks that she is pregnant. It is important to see the doctor regularly throughout pregnancy, so a woman should keep all her prenatal care appointments.

### **Avoid harmful substances.**

Avoid alcohol at any time you think you might become pregnant and during pregnancy. Alcohol in a woman's bloodstream passes to the developing baby through the umbilical cord. There is no known safe amount of alcohol use during pregnancy or while trying to get pregnant. There is also no safe time during pregnancy to drink alcohol. All types of alcohol are equally harmful, including wine and beer. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, and a range of lifelong physical, behavioral, and intellectual disabilities to the unborn baby.

### National Birth Defects Prevention Month

- January -



1 in every 33 babies is born with a birth defect.

### **Avoid smoking cigarettes.**

The dangers of smoking during pregnancy include preterm birth, certain birth defects (cleft lip or cleft palate), and infant death. Even being around tobacco smoke puts a woman and her pregnancy at risk for problems. Quitting smoking before getting pregnant is best. For a woman who is already pregnant, quitting as early as possible can still help protect against some health problems for the baby, such as low birth weight. It's never too late to quit smoking.

### **Avoid marijuana and other drugs.**

A woman who uses marijuana or other drugs during pregnancy can have a baby who is born preterm, of low birth weight, or with other health problems, such as birth defects. Marijuana is the recreational drug most

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commonly used during pregnancy. Since we know of no safe level of marijuana use during pregnancy, women who are pregnant, or considering becoming pregnant, should not use marijuana, even in states where marijuana is legal. Women using marijuana for medical reasons should speak with their doctor about an alternative therapy with pregnancy-specific safety data. Women who have dependency on any drug, should seek help for treatment, prior to getting pregnant or as soon after becoming pregnant as possible.

### **Prevent infections.**

Some infections that a woman can get during pregnancy can be harmful to the developing baby and can even cause birth defects. Check out our 10 tips for preventing infections before and during pregnancy at <https://www.cdc.gov/pregnancy/infections.html>.

### **Keep diabetes under control.**

Poor control of diabetes during pregnancy increases the chances for birth defects and other problems for the pregnancy. It can also cause serious complications for the woman. Proper healthcare before and during pregnancy can help prevent birth defects and other poor outcomes.

### **Healthy Weight.**

Strive to reach and maintain a healthy weight. A woman who is obese (a body mass index [BMI] of 30 or higher) before pregnancy is at a higher risk for complications during pregnancy. Obesity also increases a pregnant woman's risk of several serious birth defects.

### **Talk with your healthcare provider.**

Talk to a healthcare provider before taking any medications if you are pregnant or think you might be pregnant. We know that certain medications can cause serious birth defects if they are taken during pregnancy. For many medications taken by pregnant women, the safety has been difficult to determine. If a woman is pregnant or planning a pregnancy, she should speak to her doctor before discontinuing any medication that has been prescribed to her by a doctor and not start new medications without first speaking to her doctor. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medications and dietary or herbal products.

### **Talk to a healthcare provider about vaccinations.**

Most vaccinations are safe during pregnancy and some vaccinations, such as the flu vaccine and the Tdap vaccine (adult tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis vaccine), are specifically recommended during pregnancy. Some vaccines protect women against infections that can cause birth defects. Having the right vaccinations at the right time can help keep a woman and her baby healthy.

Pregnancy is an exciting time, but it also can be stressful. Knowing that you are doing all that you can to get ready for pregnancy, staying healthy during pregnancy, and giving your baby a healthy start in life will help you to have peace of mind.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/prevention.html>

# **Thyroid Health Awareness**

## **Signs and Symptoms of Thyroid Cancer**

Thyroid cancer can cause any of the following signs or symptoms:

- A lump in the neck, sometimes growing quickly
- Swelling in the neck
- Pain in the front of the neck, sometimes going up to the ears
- Hoarseness or other voice changes that do not go away
- Trouble swallowing

- Trouble breathing

- A constant cough that is not due to a cold

If you have any of these signs or symptoms, talk to your doctor right away. Many of these symptoms can also be caused by non-cancerous conditions or even other cancers of the neck area. Lumps in the thyroid are common and are usually benign. Still, if you have any of these symptoms, it's important to see your doctor right away so the cause can be found and treated, if needed.

Source: <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/thyroid-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/signs-symptoms.html>

# What You Need to Know About Testing for Cervical Cancer

During the past several decades, screening – testing for cancer before symptoms develop – has reduced deaths from cervical cancer, as doctors have been able to find cancer early and treat it, or prevent it from developing.

The most common form of cervical cancer starts with pre-cancerous changes. These pre-cancers can be found and treated before they have the chance to turn into cancer. These pre-cancers often have no symptoms, but their cells can be detected through regular screening. If pre-cancer cells are present they can be removed to help prevent cancer.

There are 2 types of tests used for cervical cancer screening.

**The Pap test** can find early cell changes and treat them before they become cancer. The Pap test can also find cervical cancer early, when it's easier to treat.

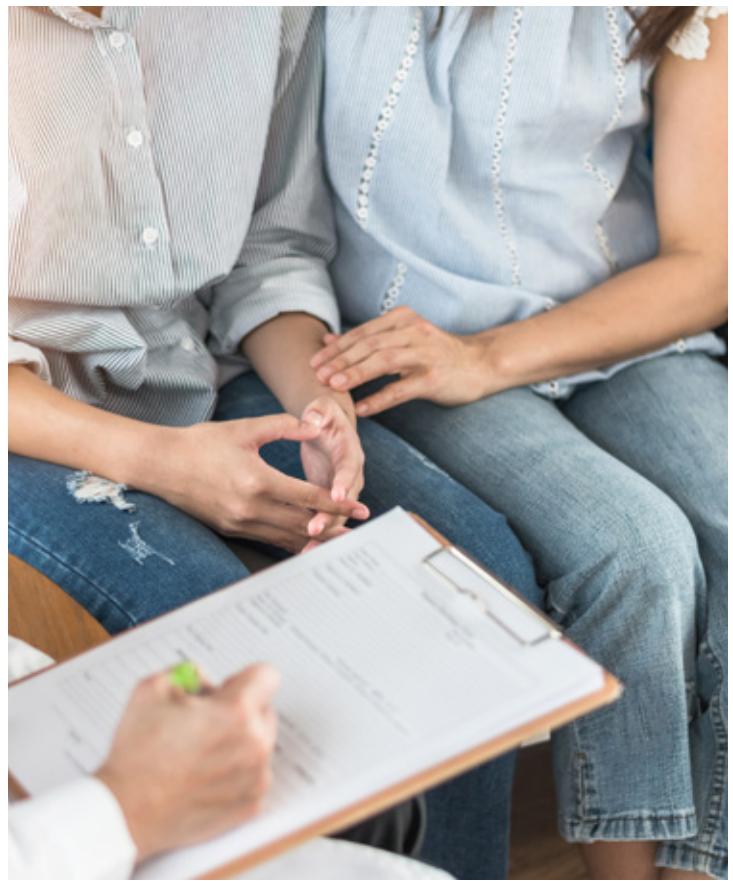
The human papilloma virus (HPV) test finds HPV infections that can lead to cell changes and cancer. HPV infections are very common. Most HPV infections are cleared by the body without causing problems or symptoms, but some infections do not clear and can lead to cell changes that might cause cancer. The HPV test may be used along with a Pap test, or to help doctors decide how to treat women who have an abnormal Pap test.

**All women should begin cervical cancer screening at age 21.** Women between the ages of 21 and 29 should have a Pap test every 3 years. Women between the ages of 30 and 65 should have both a Pap test and an HPV test every 5 years. This is the preferred approach, but it is also OK to have a Pap test alone every 3 years.

Women over age 65 who have had regular screenings with normal results should not need to be screened for cervical cancer. Women who have been diagnosed with cervical cancer or pre-cancer should continue to be screened according to the recommendations of their doctor. Women who have had both their uterus and cervix removed in a hysterectomy and have no history of cervical cancer or pre-cancer should not be screened.

Women who have had the HPV vaccine should still follow the screening recommendations for their age group.

Women who are at high risk for cervical cancer may need to be screened more often. Women at high risk might include those with HIV infection, organ transplant, or exposure to the drug DES (Diethylstilbestrol is a synthetic estrogen that was developed to supplement a woman's



natural estrogen production and can affect the women and her unborn child). These women should talk with their doctor or nurse. The American Cancer Society no longer recommends that women get a Pap test every year, because it generally takes much longer than that, 10 to 20 years, for cervical cancer to develop and overly frequent screening could lead to procedures that are not needed.

**HPV (Human papillomavirus) vaccination can prevent cervical cancer.** One way of preventing cervical cancer is to get vaccinated against HPV before you are exposed to the virus. HPV is the cause of almost all cervical cancers. Having HPV also increases the risk for other cancers and genital warts that can affect both males and females. HPV is spread through skin to skin contact, such as sexual activity. The vaccinations work best in younger people. Girls and boys should start the vaccine series at age 11 or 12, though it can be started as early as age 9.

Source: <https://www.cancer.org/latest-news/what-you-need-to-know-about-testing-for-cervical-cancer.html>

# Healthy Weight Week

National Healthy Weight Week has been observed for 7 days starting the third Sunday in January since 1994. Make it your goal in 2019 to add Health and Wellness to your daily routine. AvMed WELLfluent Living® is what we call our Wellness Program. But it is more than a program, it is a way of life that inspires our Members to be as healthy and happy as they can be by providing resources on nutrition, fitness, spiritual and emotional well-being to help them lead a truly balanced life. **Log in** to your AvMed account and search under **Services & Programs – Wellness Programs** for details on our **Active&Fit Direct™** fitness facility discount benefit and other resources to keep you living WELLfluent today.

## JANUARY EVENTS

Date	Time	Event	Location	Description
Thursday– Sunday <b>January 9 - 13, 2019</b>	Various	<b>Walt Disney World® Marathon Weekend</b>	WDW Orlando, Florida	Enjoy a Weekend of Achievement! Come join Mickey and friends for an extraordinary race weekend—put your endurance through the paces, enjoy amazing entertainment and earn commemorative medals.  <a href="https://www.rundisney.com/events/disneyworld/disneyworld-marathon-weekend/">https://www.rundisney.com/events/disneyworld/disneyworld-marathon-weekend/</a>
Saturday <b>January 12, 2019</b>	7 am	<b>Best Damn Race - Jacksonville</b>	The Jacksonville Landing, 2 W. Independent Dr Jacksonville, FL 32202	A running series created for runners by runners. Our goal is to provide a big race experience at a local race price. It doesn't matter if you are an elite runner, first timer, walker, or using a baby jogger, we want you to have the best DAMN race experience.  <a href="https://jacksonville.bestdamnrace.com/">https://jacksonville.bestdamnrace.com/</a>
Sunday <b>January 27, 2019</b>	6 am	<b>Miami Marathon</b>	Main event: American Airlines Arena Miami, FL	People coming together. People running together. A test of endurance, strength and will. Join 20,000 fellow runners, walkers, and wheelchair athletes on a gorgeous course through some of the most famous spots in Miami and Miami Beach. Secure your space at the start line today and get set to receive your one-of-a-kind custom #MiamiFamous finisher medal. It's not Miami without YOU!  <a href="http://www.themiamimarathon.com/">http://www.themiamimarathon.com/</a>



A Wellness Newsletter for AvMed Members

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