



Quality Spotlight - Patient Engagement

HopeHealth's quality focus for March is patient engagement. This clinical focus includes measures such as hospital and emergency room follow-up, chronic care management, prenatal and postpartum care, and utilizing the HopeHealth Pharmacy.

Below, read about how to prepare for a healthy pregnancy.

Preconception Care: Preparing for a Healthy Pregnancy

John Browning, MD

While starting a family is an exciting time for couples, prioritizing both mom and dad's health before pregnancy is vital to a baby's healthy development. Preparing early can also increase your chances of becoming pregnant and help reduce the risk of potential complications.

Focus on optimizing your overall health for three months or longer before attempting to conceive. Scheduling a preconception care visit with your gynecologist or health care provider is essential to discuss any potential risks and take steps to prepare your body for a healthy pregnancy. It's important for dad to be involved too, since a healthy father produces healthier sperm for half of the baby's DNA!



Preconception Care

Schedule a pre-pregnancy wellness visit to review your medical history, discuss strategies to increase your chances of getting pregnant and minimize potential risks, and explore optimal health options for both you and your baby.

A preconception care visit may include a physical examination, blood work, review of medical history, medication overview, discussion of lifestyle choices, and updating any necessary vaccines. The genetic history of both parents is also reviewed.

Taking stock of any current medical conditions that can affect the fetus, such as obesity, diabetes, and hypertension, is important for a healthy pregnancy. Maternal history of conditions such as pre-eclampsia or gestational diabetes with any previous pregnancies is also important to review.

Lifestyle

Your lifestyle is a primary area of focus when preparing for pregnancy. If women have a poor diet, smoke, or are under high stress before or during pregnancy, this can increase the baby's risk of

birth defects, low birth weight, and developing medical conditions such as learning disabilities, depression, obesity, and diabetes.

Eating well, staying hydrated, engaging in regular exercise, managing stress, getting sufficient sleep, and maintaining meaningful connections with family and friends are all essential for growing a healthy baby. Addressing areas that need improvement can help you establish healthier routines that promote overall health, both now and during pregnancy.

You don't have to do everything at once. Pick one lifestyle aspect at a time and aim for sustainable changes to improve your health and increase your chance of becoming pregnant.

Nutrition

A nutrient-rich diet is essential for preparing to grow a healthy baby. Focus on eating regular meals and snacks to maximize nutrient intake. Discuss any weight-related goals and strategies with your provider. Important supplements before and during pregnancy include prenatal vitamins, folic acid, Vitamin D, and iodine supplements. Prioritize hydration to ensure the proper function of the ovaries in women and the testes in men, increasing the chances of fertilization.

Focus on a nutrient-rich diet of whole foods, including:

- **Lean proteins – lean cuts of beef or pork, poultry, seafood, eggs, beans, and peas**
- **Complex carbohydrates – fruits, vegetables, and whole grains**
- **Healthy fats – olive oil, avocado, avocado oil, nuts, and seeds**

Limit highly processed foods that can inhibit fertility, including sugary drinks, mass-produced baked goods, candy, candy bars, and salty snacks that are low in nutrients and high in fat, salt, sugar, preservatives, and additives.

Fish, such as salmon, sardines, cod, and herring, are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which support brain development and function. Steer clear of fish high in mercury, including tuna, shark, swordfish, king mackerel, and tilefish, as they can negatively affect the baby's brain and nervous system.

Staying away from alcohol, tobacco, THC products, and other drugs helps protect a developing baby from harm. Caffeine can also affect fetal development and is recommended to be limited or avoided during pregnancy.

To avoid the risk of food poisoning, which can endanger a fetus, don't consume undercooked meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs, and read labels to avoid unpasteurized products, including raw milk and fresh-squeezed juice. Consuming processed meats such as deli meats, sausage, and bacon carries the risk of the food-borne illness *Listeria*, which is linked to miscarriage.

Mental Health

The mental health of the mother also has a strong impact before and during pregnancy. High stress, depression, anxiety, and other untreated mental health disorders can harm the baby's brain development during pregnancy and affect areas that impact emotional control, attention, and memory. This can lead to behavioral issues, learning disabilities, and mental health disorders during your child's life. Work with your provider and develop a plan to treat and find support for any mental health issues.

Physical Activity

Make time for physical activity, find something you enjoy, and aim for 150 minutes of active exercise a week to increase fertility, improve your mood and fitness level, and help manage various medical conditions. During pregnancy, regular exercise can help decrease back and pelvic pain, reduce your risk of pregnancy complications, prepare your body for the physical demands of labor, and promote a faster recovery after delivery.

Sleep

Aim for 7.5 to 8 hours of sleep per night. Deep sleep promotes the release of growth hormone and supports healthy fetal development. Sleep hygiene includes going to bed and waking up at the same time, sleeping in a dark, cool room, no screens at least 30 minutes before bed, and having a wind-down ritual such as stretching, reading, hot tea, warm bath, or dimmer lights. Discuss any sleep disturbances with your health care provider.

Environmental Exposure

Environmental exposures to chemicals that can cause harm, including pesticides, workplace chemicals like solvents, lead, and rodent droppings, are also a consideration to discuss with your provider prior to pregnancy.

Ovulation and Fertility Tracking

While it's not a guarantee, tracking ovulation and fertility during your monthly cycle can help you discern the best time to become pregnant. Knowing your fertility window and ovulation time can help you time intercourse or insemination more accurately. Some women use low-tech methods such as tracking on a physical calendar, the basal body temperature method, or ovulation test strips.

Fertility mobile apps are convenient and user-friendly. These apps utilize personal data to track menstrual cycle symptoms, fertility, and ovulation. Fertility apps are not 100% accurate, but their accuracy has increased over the last several years. For women with irregular periods, endometriosis, or polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), look for apps that offer specialized tracking options and personalized recommendations. Some of the popular tracking apps include Glow, Ovia, Kindara, and Flo.

Deciding to have a baby is a life-changing event. Being proactive in your preconception care enhances your health, reduces potential risks, and increases your chances of conceiving and giving birth to a strong, healthy baby!

2026 HopeHealth Town Hall Series



HOPEHEALTH TOWN HALL MEETING

LEARN MORE ABOUT HOPEHEALTH
WITH CARL HUMPHRIES, CEO



Throughout the year, CEO Carl Humphries will host quarterly town hall meetings for patients and community members, designed to build awareness and deepen understanding of HopeHealth's mission, services, and unique role as a community health center.

For more information and to register for upcoming Town Hall events, visit our [Facebook page](#) or the [website](#).

10,000 Facebook Followers!



We have reached a milestone - over 10,000 followers on Facebook! Thank you! We love our community and patients!

[Click here](#) to follow us on Facebook if you are not already.

HopeHealth Out & About

Delmae Elementary Spanish Immersion



Dr. Camille Montes-Ramos, pediatrician with HopeHealth Pediatrics in Florence, read books in Spanish and English to the kindergartners in the Spanish Immersion program at Dalmae Elementary on March 6. This activity was held as part of Read Across America Week.

CEO Receives Most Influential People Recognition



We are proud to share that HopeHealth CEO Carl Humphries has been named one of the B2B Pee Dee Business Magazine's 50 Most Influential People in the Pee Dee region.

Carl's recognition reflects his unwavering dedication to expanding access to quality health care, championing community partnerships, and leading HopeHealth with integrity and compassion. His work continues to advance the well-being of the families and communities we serve.

Recipe Spotlight

Quick Cucumber Salad

Welcome more salads into spring! This salad is easy to make and can be kept on hand as a side to most any dish, like burgers or grilled chicken. Cucumbers are low in calories, contain water and electrolytes such as potassium for hydration, and have a boost of vitamins, including B, C, and K. This makes about 4 cups and serves 8.



Ingredients:

- 4 medium-sized cucumbers, sliced
- 1 small onion, thinly sliced
- 1 ½ cups vinegar
- ½ cup water
- 1-2 Tbsp. sugar, honey, monk fruit sweetener, or other sweetener
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

- In a medium bowl, add vinegar, water, sweetener, salt, and pepper, and mix well or until the sweetener dissolves.
- In a large bowl, add the sliced cucumbers and onions, pour the liquid mixture over them, and mix well.
- Cover and marinate in the fridge for at least an hour before serving.
- Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator up to 4 days. The cucumbers stay crisp for about 2 days. Give it a good stir before serving.

Variations:

- Cucumbers may have soft or harder skin, and peeling is optional. Keeping all or some of the skin on adds more fiber and nutrients.
- Almost any vinegar will work for this recipe. To build more flavors, choose an apple cider, white wine, or rice vinegar.
- Use whatever type of onion you like, including Vidalia, red, white, or spring onions.
- Add fresh dill for a pickled flavor.
- Add diced tomatoes, feta cheese, and basil for a heartier salad.
- Use this as a base for a main-dish salad by adding it to lettuce and other veggies you like, including carrots, celery, tomatoes, or broccoli, along with a protein.

Visit hope-health.org/community/events to learn about and sign up for free community classes offered by HopeHealth! Topics range from healthy cooking to diabetes management, prioritizing movement, carbohydrate counting, and more.

How satisfied were you with the content of this email?

5 - Very Satisfied

4 - Satisfied

3 - Neutral

2 - Dissatisfied

1 - Very Dissatisfied

Care to offer more feedback? [Click here](#) to send an email!

HopeHealth QuickLinks

[Locations](#)

[Services](#)

[Providers](#)

[News](#)

[Contact Us](#)

hope-health.org

Support Community Health Centers at hcadvocacy.org. Become an advocate today!

HopeHealth | 360 N. Irby St. | Florence, SC 29501 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Our Privacy Policy](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)