

Your  
Health



© ADOBE STOCK

# Working from Home

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic catapulted many working professionals into a whole new universe: working from home.

All of a sudden, workers who had never done their jobs remotely found themselves balancing childcare, chores and other daily burdens they usually had taken care of for them while at the office.

With this extra stress, mental health has become a big topic for employees and employers alike.

The numbers don't lie: A vast majority of workers (80%) would consider quitting their position for a job that focused more on employees' mental health, according to a recent study published by TELUS International.

## THE PROBLEM

Their research indicates that 75% of U.S. workers have struggled at work due to anxiety caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and other recent world events.

Here are a few of the survey's most important findings that seem to be attributing to this decline in mental health for work-from-home professionals:

- 4 out of 5 workers find it hard to "shut off" in the evenings.
- Over half of respondents



© ADOBE STOCK

have taken a "mental health day" since they started working from home, due to the pandemic.

- Ninety-seven percent say that vacation days while working from home are important for "recharging" — another way of saying "mental health."
- Half of the respondents cite that their sleep patterns

have been interrupted due to COVID-19, and 45% say they feel less healthy mentally while working from home.

## FIND YOUR FLEXIBILITY

Flexible schedules are actually one of the benefits of working from home, and many professionals say flexibility is the most important

factor for them in considering a new role.

Many workers found that during the heights of the pandemic, that work days actually became longer. A joint study by Harvard and New York University analyzed more than 3 million responses since the coronavirus began, and found that the workday is nearly an

hour longer because of the pandemic.

More meetings are driving fatigue and making professionals unable to be productive. If you're considering a new role or trying to improve your current one, talk with your boss about a more flexible schedule that may give you some of your time back.



# Find a Local Dietitian

When looking for professional help with putting together a personalized dietary plan, it's important to find someone who can give you one-on-one attention.

That's because everyone's bodies and dietary needs are different, and require varying strategies.

Since there is no one-size-fits-all diet plan on the market, you need someone who can analyze your body's needs, as well as your eating and exercise behaviors, to create a plan that will actually work for you.

Here's why going with a local professional makes the most sense:

- They are able to deliver customized, in-person service.
- They depend on your business and will go above and beyond to keep their company open.
- They are knowledgeable about local food options, particularly the seasonality of locally grown fruits and vegetables.

But how do you find a good local dietitian, especially if you're starting from the beginning? Read on for tips on landing the perfect local professional for your health needs.

## ASK YOUR FRIENDS

Referrals are the best way



© ADOBE STOCK

for local companies to grow. Use your social media following to see if anyone has had success using a local dietary professional. Weight and overall health are hot topics that generally generate a lot of response on social media, so if you're comfortable talking about it online, you may be able to find strong referrals.

You can also find local groups committed to overall wellness, or ask the workers at your local gym. Oftentimes, they are highly connected to other professionals in the health and wellness space.

## RESEARCH THEIR QUALIFICATIONS

When shopping for a new

dietitian, be sure to interview a few before making your final decision. Reputable professionals will be honest when it comes to their experience and the type of qualifications they possess.

If they have a website or LinkedIn profile, you should be able to get a sense of the extent of their experience and

knowledge through some online research.

Currently 48 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia have statutory provisions regulating the dietetics profession or associated titles such as "dietitian" and "nutritionist," according to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.



# Practice Sun Safety

Spending time outside is a great way to be physically active, reduce stress and get vitamin D, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But too much sun can come with a cost: skin cancer.

Most skin cancers are caused by too much exposure to ultraviolet light, which is made of an invisible kind of radiation that comes from the sun, tanning beds and sun-lamps. These UV rays can damage skin cells and leave you with serious health issues.

Fortunately, there are many ways to curb the onset of skin cancer. As the pool season winds down and you enjoy the final months of milder fall temperatures, it is vital that you protect your skin from the sun.

## HOW TO PROTECT YOUR SKIN FROM THE SUN

You can reduce your risk of sun damage and skin cancer by staying in the shade. You can find shade under an umbrella, tree or other shelter.

If you plan to spend time in the sun for an extended period of time, your best bet to protect your skin is to use



© ADOBE STOCK

sunscreen or wear protective clothing.

When possible, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants and skirts. You can also try to wear a T-shirt or a beach cover-up if you're planning on enjoying the beach.

Clothes made from tightly woven fabric offer the best protection, and opt for darker colors for optimal protection.

## WEAR A HAT

Many people wear hats to give them more protection. The CDC recommends hats with brims all the way around that shades your face, ears and the back of your neck. A tightly woven fabric offers the best protection versus straw hats that will let sunlight through. If you wear a baseball cap, don't forget to cover the exposed

parts of your head, including your ears, with sunscreen.

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT SUNSCREEN

When choosing a sunscreen, put on broad spectrum sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB rays and has an SPF of 15 or higher before you go outside. You should always apply sunscreen in a thick layer

that covers all exposed skin.

Looking to take your youngsters outside to enjoy the sun? Remember that sunscreen is not recommended for babies who are six months old or younger. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommends keeping infants out of the sun during midday and using protective clothing if they have to be in the sun.



# Getting — and Staying — Active

A body in motion, stays in motion. If you're a regular exerciser and workout fanatic, you likely believe in this statement and use it to motivate you.

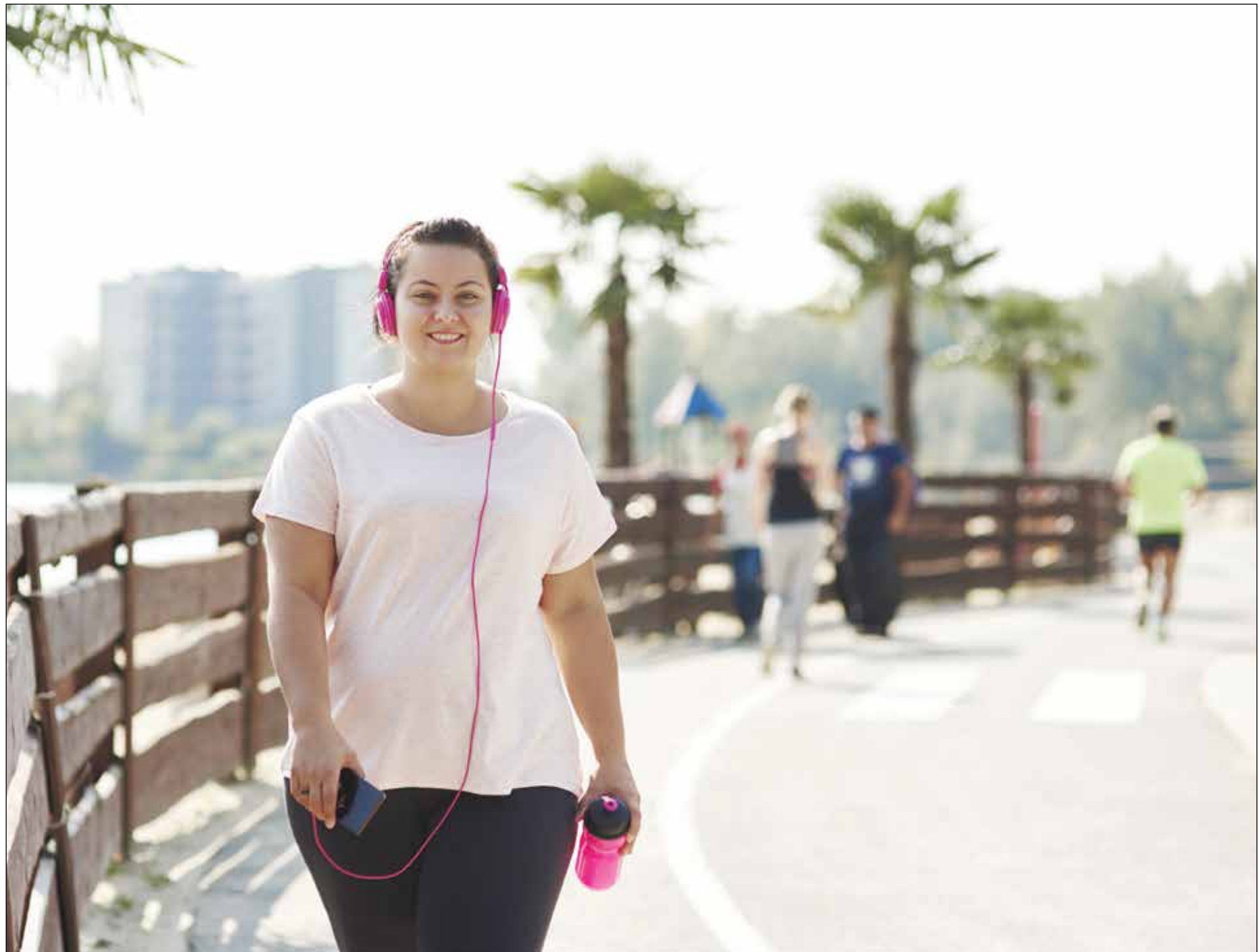
A body in rest stays at rest. If you're struggling to find your groove in the gym or with consistent exercise, you might relate more with this statement.

No matter where you are in your fitness and overall health journey, there are opportunities in your daily life to get — and stay — active.

## BY THE NUMBERS

According to the National Institutes of Health, it's medically proven that people who do regular physical activity have:

- Up to a 35% lower risk of coronary heart disease and stroke.
- Up to a 50% lower risk of type 2 diabetes.
- Up to a 50% lower risk of colon cancer.
- Up to a 20% lower risk of breast cancer.
- A 30% lower risk of early death.
- Up to an 83% lower risk of osteoarthritis.
- Up to a 68% lower risk of hip fracture.
- A 30% lower risk of falls (among older adults).
- Up to a 30% lower risk of



© ADOBE STOCK

depression.

- Up to a 30% lower risk of dementia.

## GET STARTED

To stay healthy, adults should try to be active every day and aim to achieve at least 150 minutes of physical activity over a week through a vari-

ety of activities, according to the NIH. Here are some tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on getting active in a safe, effective manner:

- Talk to your doctor if you have a chronic condition like type 2 diabetes or heart disease.

- Get the support of your friends and family — and invite them to get active with you.

- Start slowly and add time, frequency or intensity every week.

- Schedule physical activity for times in the day or week when you're most energetic.

- Plan ahead. Make physical

activity part of your daily or weekly schedule.

- Walk instead of drive to nearby destinations or park the car farther away and fit in a walk to your destination.

- Support improvements in your neighborhood that make it easier to walk or bike to where you want to go.



# Benefits of Having Friends

Friendships can have a major impact on your health and well-being, specifically in reducing many significant health problems, including depression, high blood pressure and an unhealthy body mass index, according to the Mayo Clinic.

Experts point out that older adults with a rich social life are likely to live longer than their peers with fewer connections. There are many reasons for this.

According to experts at the Mayo Clinic, friends are important because they:

- Increase your sense of belonging and purpose.
- Boost your happiness and reduce your stress.
- Improve your self-confidence and self-worth.
- Help you cope with traumas, such as divorce, serious illness, job loss or the death of a loved one.

- Encourage you to change or avoid unhealthy lifestyle habits, such as excessive drinking or lack of exercise.

- Friends also play a significant role in promoting your overall health.

## HOW MANY FRIENDS SHOULD YOU HAVE?

Experts say that quality



© ADOBE STOCK

counts more than quantity when it comes to the number of friends in your circle. Nurturing a few truly close relationships can bring you all of the benefits you're looking for when building your friendships.

Don't get hung up on the number of people you socialize with, but spend time mak-

ing sure you're getting positive engagement out of your interactions. Plan fun events that everyone enjoys and don't be afraid to try new things with your friends.

## HOW TO FIND NEW FRIENDS

Life gets in the way when it comes to finding new

acquaintances, especially for adults.

If you're struggling to find new friends, take the initiative rather than waiting for invitations to come to you. This may be uncomfortable at first, but it's a great way to open yourself up to new friendships that may be right there in front of you.

Look for groups or clubs that gather around common hobbies. Join a class at your local community college to learn a new skill and meet people with similar interests. Volunteer at a local hospital or community center to improve your chances of meeting people who have the same passions as you.



# Think Before you Drink

Because many beverages are loaded with extra sugar, calories and carbohydrates, what you drink is as important as what you eat. It may not seem like much, but an extra soda or sweet tea per day can add up over time.

Their lack of overall nutrients can actually be filling you up with empty calories without helping your body maintain a healthy balance. Use the tips below to help you make better beverage choices and help your overall health and wellness.

## REACH FOR WATER

Water is your body's main chemical component and makes up almost 70% of your body weight. Every cell, tissue and organ in your body needs water to work properly, hence the importance of drinking water regularly to rehydrate throughout the day.

The U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine determined that an adequate daily fluid intake is:

- About 15.5 cups of fluid per day for men.
- About 11.5 cups of fluid per day for women.

These recommendations cover fluids from water, other



© ADOBE STOCK

beverages and food. The Mayo Clinic recommends that eight of these cups are water.

Experts recommend drinking water with each meal and between meals, while you exercise, and if you feel thirsty. The Mayo Clinic says you will know if you're getting enough water when:

- You rarely feel thirsty.
- Your urine is colorless or

light yellow.

## COMPARE FOOD LABELS

If you reach for something other than water, use the nutrition label when shopping for beverages. Check and compare calories, amounts of added sugars and servings per container.

Try to avoid extra sugary drinks or beverages with of cal-

ories and carbohydrates. If you're looking for something flavored, you can always jazz up your plain water or seltzer water with lemon, lime or orange slices. These additions can give you the health benefits of extra antioxidants, as well.

## RETHINK YOUR COFFEE

Skip the whipped cream and

chocolate drizzle on your morning coffee.

Instead, opt for a plain cup of black coffee or use low-fat milk and a sprinkle of cinnamon or nutmeg for a lower-calorie coffee.

The extra calories consumed by overloaded coffee can put you behind in a big way before your day even gets started.

# Planning for Pregnancy

If you are thinking about having a baby in the future, it's never too early to start putting together a plan.

Preconception health has come a long way over the past few decades, and physicians are more prepared than ever to help you put together a solid pregnancy strategy.

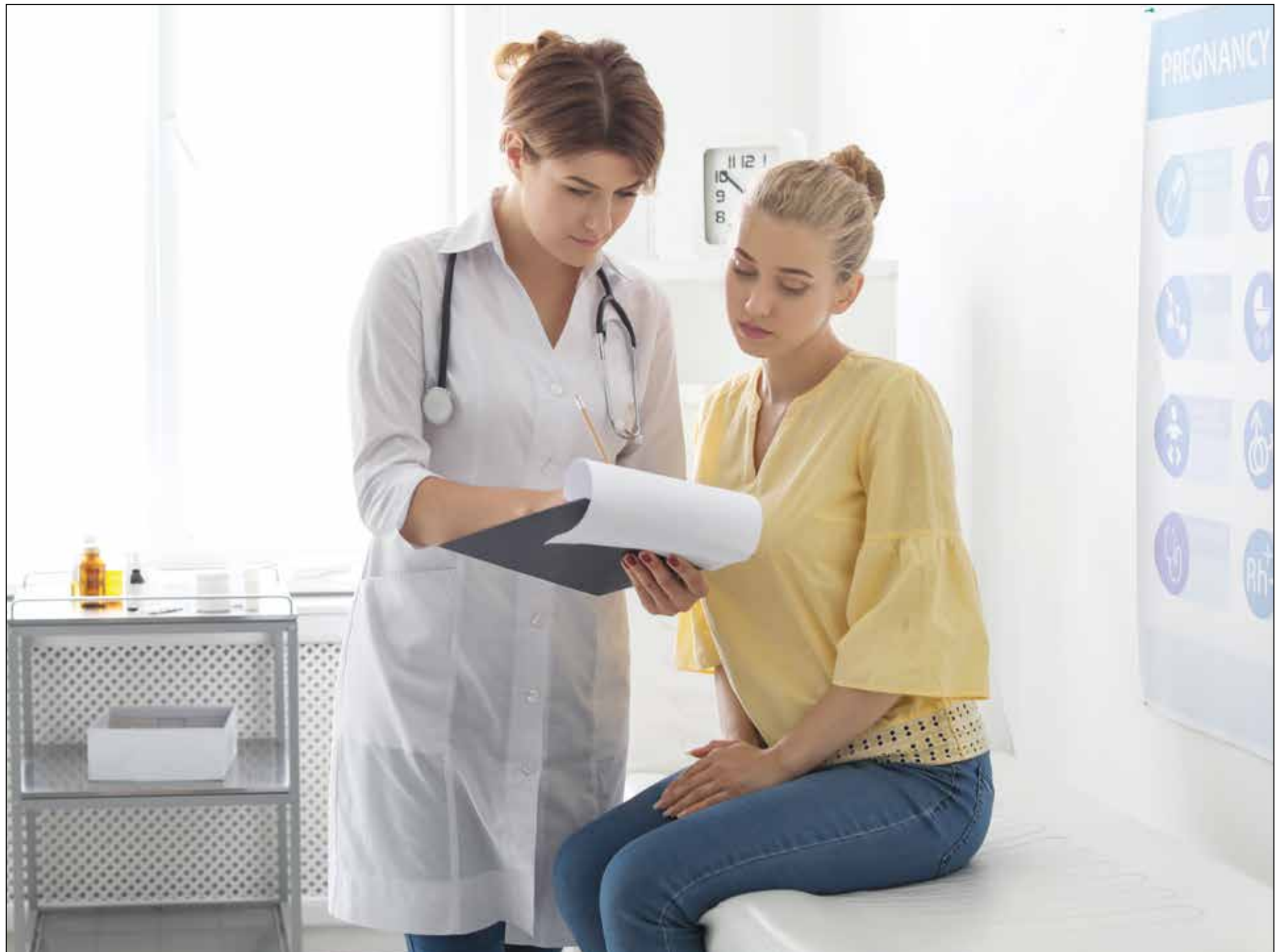
For some women, getting their body ready for pregnancy can take a few months. For other women, it might take longer or shorter, depending on past health history and current health behaviors.

## VISIT WITH YOUR LOCAL PHYSICIAN

Before getting pregnant, it's important to talk to your doctor about preconception health care. Together, you'll discuss your health history and any medical conditions you currently have that could affect a pregnancy.

Some of these conditions include: Sexually transmitted diseases, diabetes, thyroid disease, high blood pressure or other chronic diseases.

You'll also want to be up front with your doctor about your lifestyle behaviors. If you smoke, drink alcohol or use certain drugs, health care professionals can help you with counseling or support services that will help you be as healthy as possible moving into your pregnancy.



© ADOBE STOCK

## MEDICATION REVIEW

Your physician will also discuss any medicines that you are taking or vaccinations that you might need. Understanding this information will help you devise specific steps you can take before pregnancy to prevent certain birth defects.

Taking certain medicines

during pregnancy can cause serious birth defects, according to the Mayo Clinic. These include some prescription and over-the-counter medications and dietary or herbal supplements.

If you are planning a pregnancy, you should discuss the need for any medication with your doctor before becoming

pregnant and make sure you are taking only those medications that are necessary.

## FOLIC ACID

Folic acid is a B vitamin, and a highly recommended addition to your diet if trying to become pregnant. 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 baby's brain and spine, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Talk with your physician about when to start a folic acid regimen and be sure to follow it closely for the recommended timeframe.