



Why Spacing between Pregnancies is a Healthy Choice

Waiting until the youngest child is two years old before becoming pregnant again is healthy for moms, babies, and families. Research has shown that waiting this period of time between births is usually best for the following reasons:

The current baby will develop well because

- ✦ the parents can give lots of attention to the baby, taking care of basic needs, and assisting with development tasks as the child grows.
- ✦ the mom will be able to continue breastfeeding and provide important nutrients.
- ✦ parents will have time to bond with the child.

The mom will benefit because

- ✦ she will have more energy and less stress.
- ✦ she will be less likely to have postpartum depression.
- ✦ her body will have time to replenish its nutritional stores before the next pregnancy.
- ✦ she will have less risk of complications with the next pregnancy, such as bleeding, preterm labor, uterine rupture, and other complications.
- ✦ she will have time to resolve any health problems and follow good habits such as healthy eating, exercising, taking vitamins, staying away from chemicals and hazardous materials, and stopping smoking, before beginning the next pregnancy.

The family will benefit because

- ✦ parents will have more time to bond with each child.
- ✦ families will have time to be together and for activities other than infant care.
- ✦ parents will have more time for each other.
- ✦ families will have less pressure on finances.

The next baby will benefit because

- ✦ there is less risk of preterm birth (before 37 weeks) if pregnancies are spaced at least two years apart. Babies that are premature are at risk for breathing problems, mental disabilities, vision and hearing loss, and even death.
- ✦ the baby is more likely to be a healthy weight at birth. Problems associated with low birth weight include heart defects, breathing problems, bleeding in the brain and intestinal complications, as well as mental disabilities and vision loss.
- ✦ parents will have more time to devote to each child.

This document is available on line at http://www.wvperinatal.org/unplanned_preg.htm For more information, please refer to the following sources:

Conde-Agudelo, A. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, April 19, 2006; vol 295: pp 1809-1823. Agustin Conde-Agudelo, MD, MPH, Fundacion Santa Fe de Bogota, Colombia. Rachel A. Royce, PhD, MPH, Research Triangle Institute International, Research Triangle Park, N.C. Royce, R. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, April 19, 2006; vol 295: pp 1837-1838. Available on line at <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/reprint/295/15/1809.pdf>.
Utah Department of Health, Reproductive Health Program. *Facts on Birth Spacing*, available on line at http://health.utah.gov/rhp/pregnancy/preged/afterpreg/Pregnancy_Spacing.htm. Contra Costa Health Services, Contra Costa, California. *Birth Spacing -- Just for us 2 years*, http://www.cchealth.org/topics/birth_spacing/

WV Perinatal Partnership 2009

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