

Baby Spacing and Timing Pregnancies
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It is not unusual for parents to consider how far apart to have children (“Baby Spacing”). Usually this consideration is a result of the parents’ views of how the siblings will interact with each other, or their financial situation. However, there are also important health issues to be considered for both the baby and mother.

A woman needs to understand the health implications of “Baby Spacing”. Becoming pregnant too soon does not allow her body to recover from the previous birth. It takes time to recover lost nutrients and for her body to heal from the stress of pregnancy and childbirth. According to a study by the New England Journal of Medicine, a woman who becomes pregnant less than 6 months after the birth of her previous child has a 40% higher risk of having a low birth weight baby. A baby born with a low birth weight can have serious medical issues related to heart, digestion, eye, and brain development.



Further, waiting at least 24 months between pregnancies will reduce the chance of miscarriage.

This same study found that for the health of the baby, the best time to become pregnant again is 18-23 months after giving birth. Specifically, the chance for having a premature or low birth weight baby can be reduced by waiting at least 18 months between pregnancies. Further, waiting at least 24 months between pregnancies will reduce the chance of miscarriage.

Other considerations for “Baby Spacing” include the relationship between siblings. Some studies show that siblings over 4 have had the time necessary to build a relationship with parents, and their own self esteem to most easily make the transition to a new brother or sister. But, siblings who have less than 4 years age difference often make better play partners growing up. There are additional factors that can impact the family’s transition. These include financial, work, daycare, and housing issues, as well as the increased demands on time another child – specifically a baby, can create. It is important for parents to look at all these factors when determining the right time to become pregnant. Most importantly, this should include a discussion with the mother’s doctor to help determine she is in the best possible health for pregnancy.

For more information on “Baby Spacing”, contact the Charlotte County Health Department at one of the following locations; in Punta Gorda at 639-1181, in Port Charlotte at 255-7424, in Englewood at 475-9900; or the Charlotte County Healthy Start Coalition, 941-255-8872, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the health of pregnant women and newborns in Charlotte County.