

domestic violence

If you are being hurt by a partner or someone else, call a local shelter or crisis hot line. Also, tell your doctor or a nurse, social worker or religious leader. Tell someone you trust about physical, sexual or mental abuse. Violence at home tends to get worse over time. It may start or get worse during pregnancy.

Physical abuse can hurt your baby if you are pregnant. The blows can cause miscarriage or injuries to the fetus. Abuse can also result in a baby that weighs too little at birth, leading to lifelong health and learning problems.

No one deserves to be hurt or afraid. You may feel alone and trapped, with no way out. But there is help. There are choices. There are things you can do.

- Talk with someone at your local shelter or crisis hot line. Tell them what you are going through. They can also help you plan where to go and how to get there if you need to leave home quickly.
- Talk with someone at your doctor's office or clinic. A social worker or nurse can help you make an emergency plan and help you find support services, such as crisis hot lines, domestic violence programs, legal aid services or counseling. Most areas of California have shelters for abused women and their children.
- Have a code word or signal for your friends and neighbors. That way they will know when to call the police for you.
- Pack a bag with clothes for you and your children, a toy, your important papers (birth and shot records, photos, ID cards, etc.), an extra set of keys, extra checks, copies of health insurance cards, some quarters and paper money. Store it at a neighbor's house.
- Save some money if you can.
- Don't tell your partner about your plan.

keep in mind...

- **Call 911 if you are in danger. Don't wait.**
- **You can call 800-799-SAFE (7223) 24 hours a day and reach the National Domestic Violence Hotline. They can refer you to help near where you live. They speak 140 languages. You can also get information at www.ndvh.org online.**

You may be surprised to learn that more than 60 percent of all pregnancies in California are not planned. It may also be news that many birth defects and other newborn health problems occur in the first few weeks after conception—when you may not even know you're pregnant.

A baby's health is strongly linked to the mother's health before pregnancy. That's another important reason for you to stay healthy. Whether or not you're planning to get pregnant, it's important to follow these guidelines:

- Take a multi-vitamin with at least 400 micrograms of folic acid every day.
- Ask your doctor about your risk of diabetes.
- If you smoke, stop.
- Have a GYN exam annually.
- If you are being hurt by a partner or someone else, call a local shelter or crisis hot line. Also tell a health care worker you trust.
- Eat a variety of whole grains, fruits and vegetables every day and lower your intake of fat.