Preconception Care App

User Manual

VA HEALTH CARE | Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

User Manual

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Overview

The Preconception Care mobile application (app) provides Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) care team members and non-VA care team members with information that supports integration of preconception care into primary care visits. The app offers you information on a variety of topics important for the health of women during their reproductive years. Whether you are providing comprehensive primary care for your patients, counseling about pregnancy prevention, or helping your patient understand the pregnancy- or lactation-related risks of chronic medical conditions and medications, the Preconception Care App provides information and resources for you and your patients that you can access at your convenience and even at the point of care.

To optimize the health of women Veterans during their reproductive years, the Preconception Care App provides information and resources for care teams and their patients on the following topics:

- Reproductive Life Plan
- Reproductive History
- Birth Control Method
- Concurrent Health Issues
- Family/Genetic History & Risk
- Lifestyle Factors Checklist
- Medication Use & Risk Mitigation
- Men & Preconception Health
- Vaccinations

While the app is intended to optimize the health of women and their children by providing clinicians with up-to-date information and reliable resources, the information it contains is not a substitute for clinical judgment. The app serves as an educational resource.

This app is available for iOS, Android and Windows operating systems, and is supported by these Internet browsers:

1. Internet Explorer 9 and higher
2. Safari 7 and higher
3. Firefox 24 and higher
4. Google Chrome 30 and higher

The following User Manual provides an in-depth, step-by-step guide for using the Preconception Care App.

The Basics

Getting to know the screen

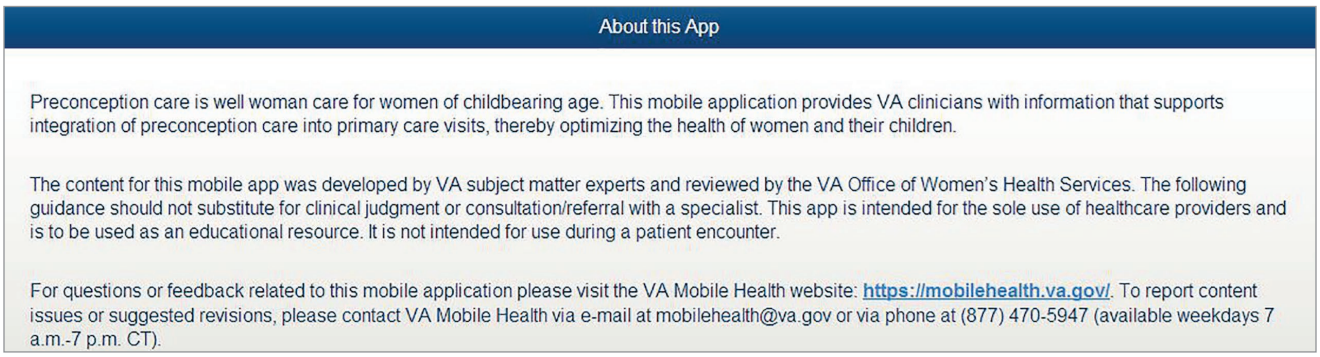
When you first access the app, you will arrive at the Home screen, which provides an overview of the information in the Preconception Care App. There are three tabs on the Home screen that are also reflected on the bottom of the screen:

- About
- Topics
- Resources

Tap the corresponding tab either on the Home screen or at the bottom of the screen to go to the information you would like to see.

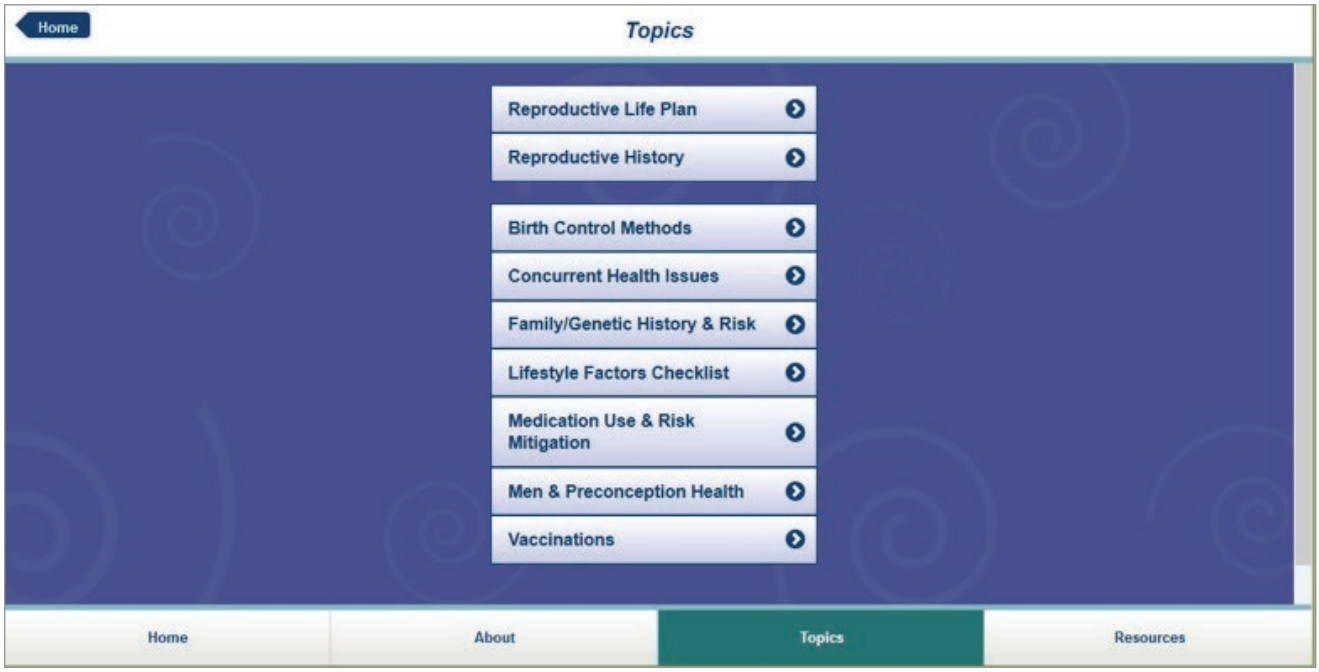
About the Preconception Care App

The app includes an About section to help you get a firm understanding of the app's purpose, how it was developed, the version number of the app and where to go for help or to offer suggestions. To view the information, either tap the About tab on the Home screen or at the bottom of the screen > You will be taken to an overview of the app.



Preconception Care Topics

The Preconception Care App provides you with a list of topics that can help guide your care of and counseling with your patients of childbearing age, whether or not they are planning to have children.



To view the topics, either tap the **Topics** tab on the Home screen or at the bottom of the screen > You will be taken to a list of topics > Tap the topic you wish to view. Topics include:

- Reproductive Life Plan
- Reproductive History
- Birth Control Methods
- Concurrent Health Issues
- Family/Genetic History & Risk
- Lifestyle Factors Checklist
- Medication Use & Risk Mitigation
- Men & Preconception Health
- Vaccinations

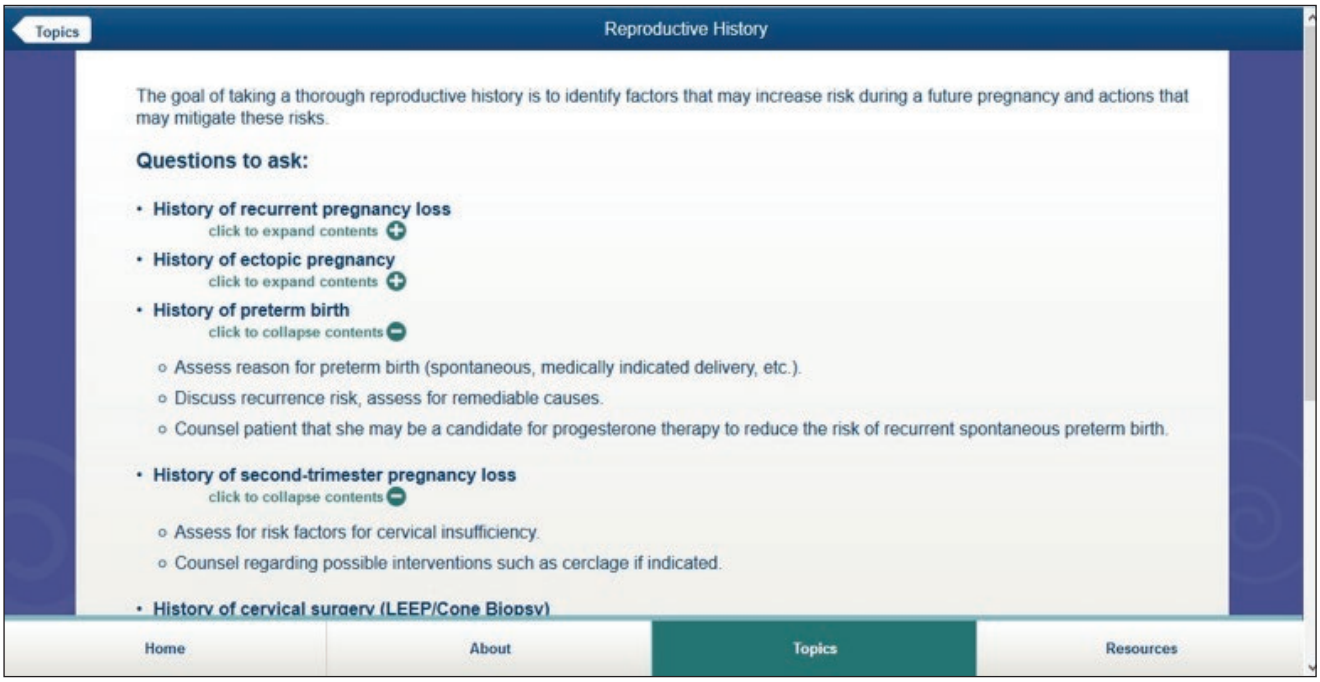
To return to a list of topics after you've selected a section, tap the **Topics** button (shaped like an arrow) in the heading of each topic's screen.

Creating a reproductive life plan

Actively planning for or preventing pregnancy reduces adverse pregnancy outcomes and improves the health of women and their families. Half of all pregnancies in the United States are unplanned. Planned pregnancies have better outcomes for mothers and babies. To help a women Veteran develop a reproductive life plan that is right for her, tap the **Topics** tab > Tap **Reproductive Life Plan** > Tap **Yes** or **No** depending on your patient's plan > A drop-down list of open-ended questions will appear that provides opportunities for education about contraception and other health issues that can impact your patient's well-being during pregnancy or her childbearing years.

Taking a reproductive history

The goal of taking a thorough reproductive history is to identify factors that may increase risk during a future pregnancy and actions that may mitigate these risks. To guide your patient through this history, tap the **Topics** tab > Tap **Reproductive History** > You will be presented with a list of questions to ask your patient > Tap the **+** button to expand the contents of each question > A list of bullet points will appear with items to cover in your conversation.



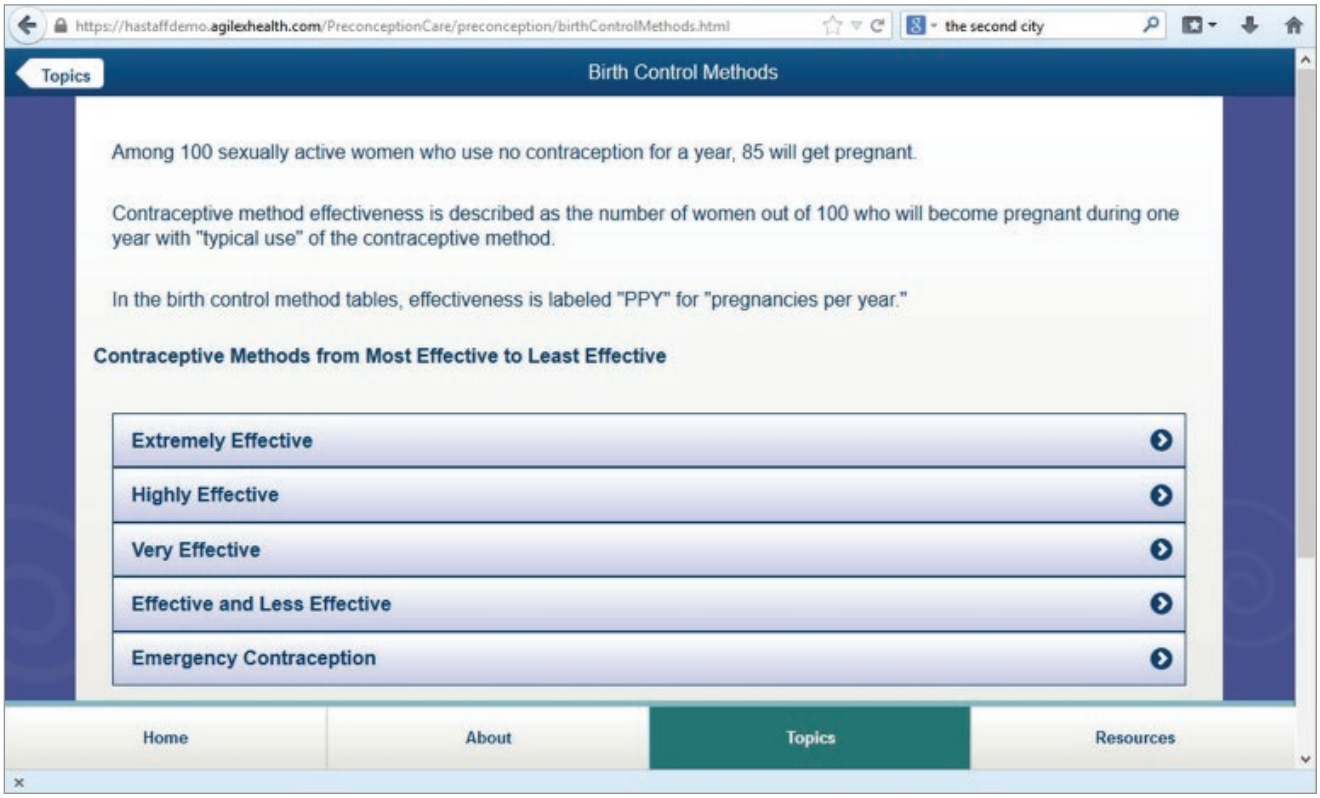
Analyzing birth control methods

The Birth Control Methods topic provides an overview of contraceptive method effectiveness based on the number of women out of 100 who will become pregnant during one year with "typical use" of the contraceptive method. Some method-specific features are also included to help you and your patient determine which method offers her the best combination of effectiveness, convenience, and potential side effects that improve their chances of using the method consistently and correctly. To learn more about different birth control options, tap the **Topics** tab > Tap **Birth Control Methods** > You will be presented with two sections within this topic:

1. Contraceptive Methods from Most Effective to Least Effective – Tables of birth control methods ordered by number of pregnancies per year (PPY). Tap the level of effectiveness you wish to view > A table of birth control methods with that level of effectiveness will appear that includes the method's name, the PPY and the features (directions and effects). **NOTE:** the Emergency Contraception method does not indicate the PPY.

2. Additional Contraceptive Information – Information about the risks of contraceptive use and details on where to order contraceptives. Tap **Relative Risks of Contraceptive Use** for information about the health risks of birth control methods. Tap **Where to Order Contraceptives** to see an outline of which birth control methods are available through your VA medical facility.

To return to the Birth Control Methods screen from any of the three sections, tap the **Close** button (shaped like an arrow) next to the heading of each section.

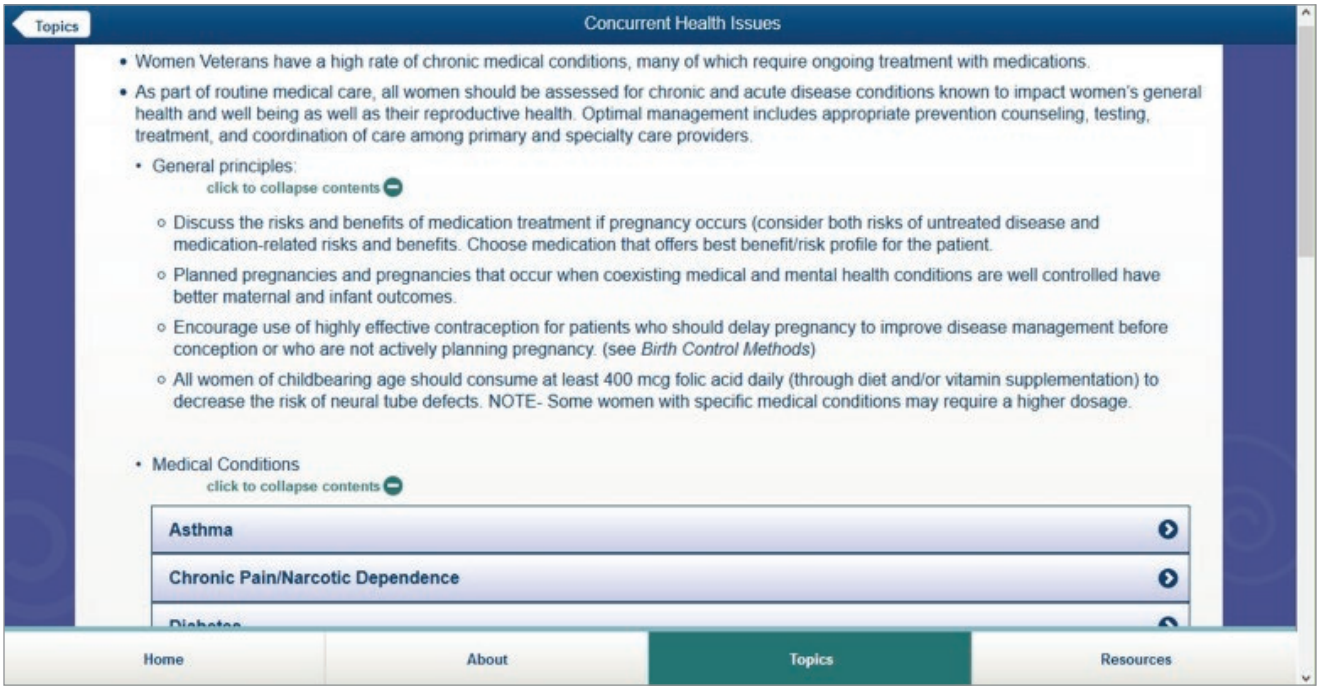


Assessing concurrent health issues

As part of routine medical care, women are assessed for chronic and acute disease conditions. Many of these conditions can affect pregnancy outcomes, and sometimes, pregnancy can positively or negatively impact the course of a disease during and following pregnancy. In addition, some medications used to treat these conditions are known to have pregnancy-related risks that should be avoided if less risky and appropriate treatment alternatives are available. As a VA care team member, awareness of these issues can help you optimize your patient's health prior to and during pregnancy. To view information about common health conditions that can affect or be affected by pregnancy, tap the **Topics** tab > Tap **Concurrent Health Issues** > You will be presented with three sections to cover with your patient:

1. General Principles – general information about preconception and pregnancy care when a patient has concurrent or preexisting health issues
2. Medical Conditions – a list of specific medical conditions with additional information about risk factors, management and contraception counseling related to each specific condition
3. Mental Health Conditions – general and specific information regarding risk factors, management and contraception counseling related to mental health conditions

Tap the **+** button to expand the contents of the section you would like to discuss > A list of bullet points will appear with items to cover in your conversation. Some of these bullet points will have their own lists that you can further expand, either by tapping on the **+** button or on the name of the topics listed in a table.



Understanding risks from genetics or family history

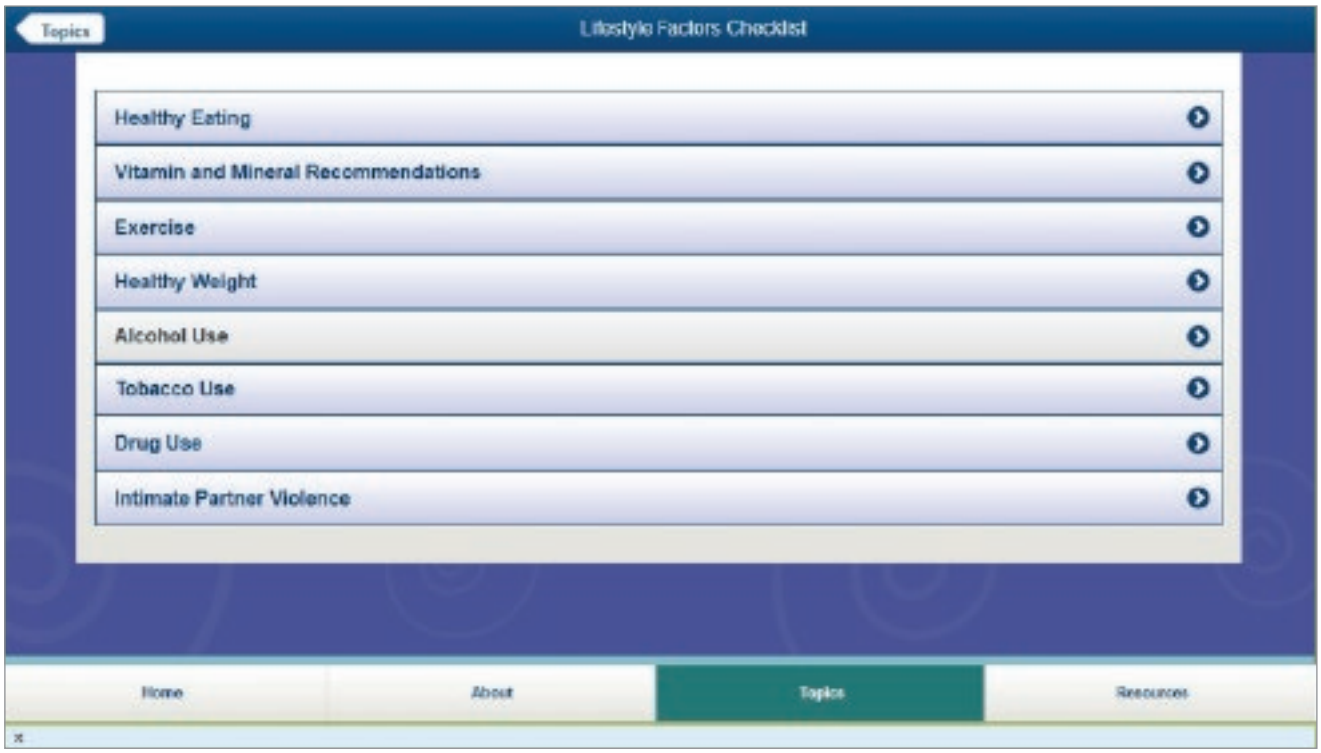
Determining your patient's genetic background and family health history gives you an opportunity to identify (and sometimes mitigate) underlying risks that could increase potential adverse outcomes for a pregnant woman Veteran and her fetus. To ask the right questions and determine when or to whom to refer your patient for further assessment, tap the **Topics** tab > Tap **Family/ Genetic History & Risk** > You will be presented with a few lists of bullet points that cover genetic risk factors, VA's Genomics Medicine Services (GMS) and guidance for taking a family history. To view information about recommended counseling and testing for disorders based upon ethnicity of either your patient or your patient's partner, tap the corresponding **Special Population** to view a table of disorders and tests.

Advising patients on lifestyle choices

Many lifestyle factors can impact the health of your patient and your patient's child(ren). To advise your patient on lifestyle factors, tap the **Topics** tab > Tap **Lifestyle Factors Checklist** > A list of factors will appear > Tap each factor to see recommended questions to ask and advice to give. Factors include:

- Healthy Eating
- Vitamin and Mineral Recommendations – includes counseling advice for vitamins and minerals as well as where to find the sources for them. Tap the **+** button to expand the contents of each vitamin and mineral to learn more.
- Exercise
- Healthy Weight
- Alcohol Use
- Tobacco Use
- Drug Use
- Intimate Partner Violence

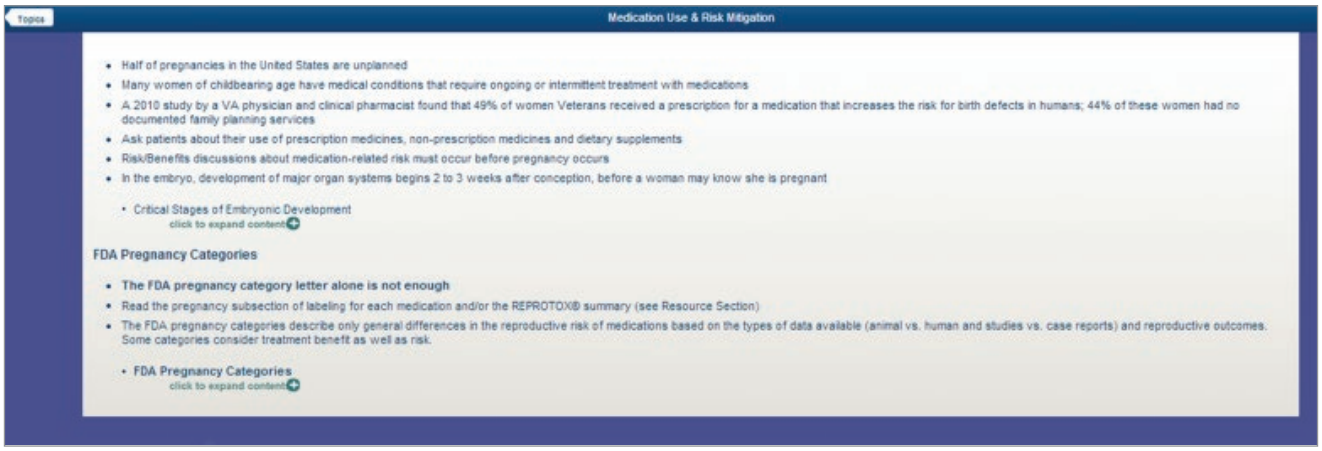
To return to the Lifestyle Factors Checklist, tap the **Back** button (shaped like an arrow) next to the heading of each section.



Assessing medication use and risk mitigation

Many women of childbearing age have medical conditions that require ongoing or intermittent treatment with medications. This section of the app helps you find and understand information about the reproductive risks of medications and informs patient counseling about these risks and about the benefits of treating serious medical conditions to improve pregnancy outcomes.
To review this information, tap the **Topics** tab > Tap **Medication Use & Risk Mitigation** > You will be presented with information about:

1. Critical Stages of Embryonic Development – a chart and timeline about when organs and organ systems undergo most of their structural formation
2. FDA Pregnancy Categories – the coding system by the FDA that indicates the potential of a drug to cause birth defects if used during pregnancy
3. REPROTOX – a database that provides information on the reproductive risks of medications (all VA care team members can access)

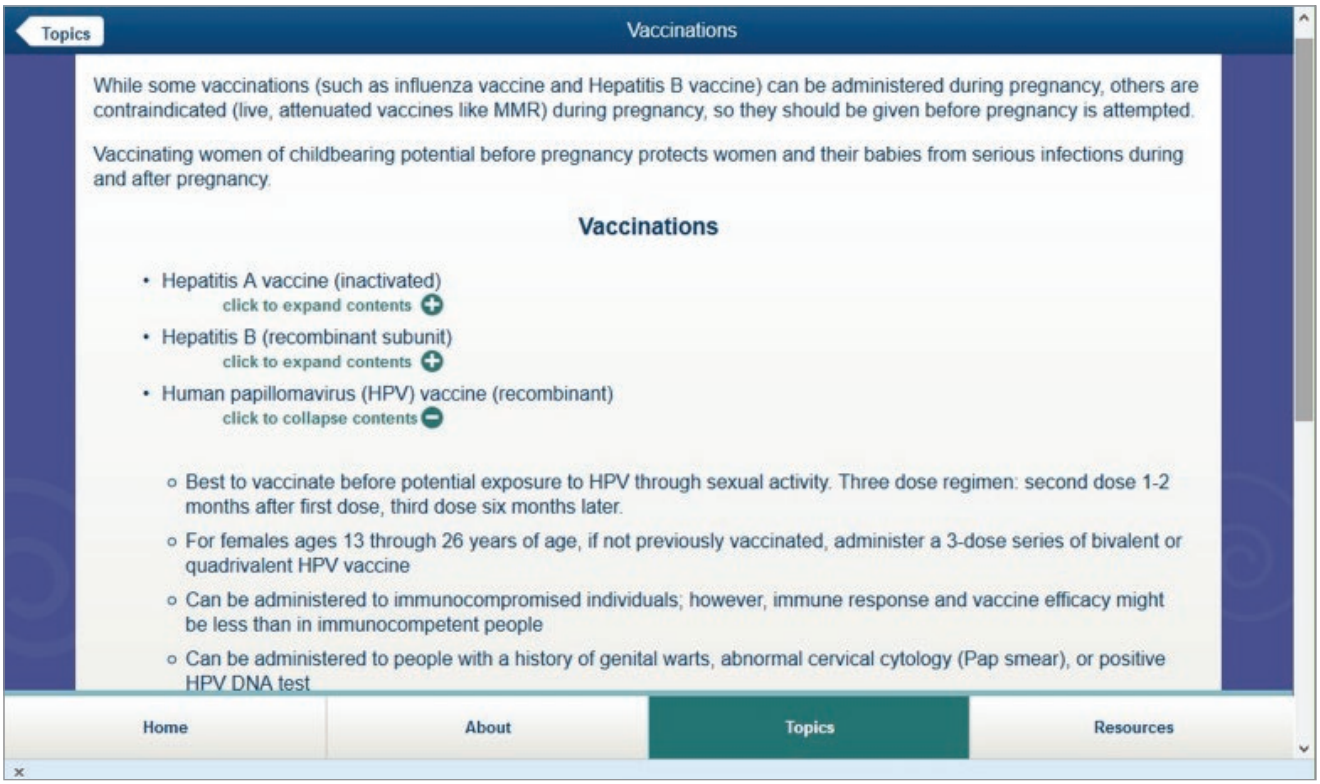


Guiding men to develop a reproductive life plan in conjunction with their partners

A man's health and lifestyle can affect his fertility and the health of his female partner and her fetus during pregnancy. To help a male patient work towards a healthy pregnancy with his partner, tap the **Topics** tab > Tap **Men & Preconception Health** > Tap the **+** button under More Information to expand the contents > You will see bullet points to guide your conversation.

Vaccinations for women of childbearing age

While some vaccinations can be administered during pregnancy, others must be given either before pregnancy is attempted (which is preferred) or after delivery. To determine which vaccines to administer and when, tap the **Topics** tab > Tap **Vaccinations** > A list of vaccines will appear > Tap the **+** button under each vaccine's name to expand contents > You will see the factors that indicate if a patient should receive the vaccine and the recommended dosing.



Preconception Tools & Resources

For additional information about topics covered in the Preconception Care App, the app provides you with reliable resources, either for you as a care team member to learn more or to share with your patients.

Accessing resources for both VA care team members and patients

Tap the **Resources** tab either on the Home screen or at the bottom of the screen > You will be taken to the Preconception Tools & Resources screen > Tap either **For Providers** or **For Patients** to view a list of resources that cater to each audience. These references and links include programs, tools and services from VA and organizations such as:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)
- The Office of the Surgeon General

Tap the **+** button under the name of the tool or resource to expand the contents. When you click on a link, you may be asked if you want to navigate to an external site; by tapping **Yes**, the link will open in a new tab in your browser. To return to the Preconception Tools & Resources screen, tap the **Resources** button (shaped like an arrow) next to the heading.

Help and Additional Information

Additional Training Materials for the Preconception Care App

More resources, such as a Quick Start Guide, Slideshow and FAQs, can be found on ***mobile.va.gov***.

Help Desk Information

If you need assistance with the Preconception Care App, dial 1-855-500-2025 to speak with a VA representative. The Help Desk is open weekdays from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. CT. For TTY assistance, dial 711.

Emergencies

You should never use this app in an emergency situation. If you encounter an emergency, call your local medical center or dial 911.

Appendices

Appendix #1: Project References

This app was developed by Agilex [www.agilex.com] according to an approved concept paper. The app was tested in a demo environment to ensure optimal functionality. The content for this app was developed by VA Subject Matter Experts and reviewed by the VA Office of Women's Health Services. Subject Matter Experts who served in the Preconception Care App's creation are: Karen Feibus, Laurie Zephyrin, Maggie Czarnogorski, Anu Torgal, Callie Wight, Eleanor (Bimla) Schwarz, Amanda Johnson, Cait Cusack, Rebecca Hulinsky and Alison Whitehead.

Appendix #2: Glossary

App – an application, or software program, that can be accessed through a website or mobile device and is designed to fulfill a particular purpose

CDC – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

FDA – Food and Drug Administration

FDA Pregnancy Categories – the coding system of Categories A, B, C, D and X by the FDA that indicates the potential of a drug to cause birth defects if used during pregnancy

HHS – Department of Health and Human Services

PPY – Pregnancies per year

Preconception care – an integral part of comprehensive care for women of childbearing age that includes pregnancy planning and prevention (contraceptive counseling), reproductive and genetic history and an approach to care that takes into account the pregnancy-related risks of ongoing medical conditions and the medications used to treat them

VA Mobile Health – an initiative that aims to improve the health of Veterans by providing technologies that will expand care beyond the traditional office visit and includes the creation of secure mobile apps that will leverage the popularity of wireless technologies to support Veterans, Caregivers and VA clinical teams [More at: mobile.va.gov]