

Later-Life Pregnancies Can Be Successful With Planning

While society may view it as less common than getting pregnant in your late teens, 20s, or early 30s, experts say later-in-life pregnancies can be successful if you plan for the complications that come with age.

“I would not want anyone to let their age to be a factor in deciding whether or not to have a child,” says Kelli Daugherty, certified nurse midwife at [OSF HealthCare in Urbana, Illinois](#). “You absolutely can have a healthy, safe, and successful pregnancy and birth over the age of 40 just as you can at the age of 20. It just may be a little more difficult to get there.”

Daugherty says women are most fertile in their late teens to mid-30s. Then, fertility begins to decline until [menopause](#), when they can no longer get pregnant.

“By age 45, fertility has declined so much that conceiving naturally for most women is not possible anymore,” Daugherty says.

By comparison, Daugherty says men will have some decline in fertility with age, but it’s much slower and much less predictable. She says most men will be fertile their entire life.

So what should couples know? Daugherty says as a woman ages, the risk also increases for pregnancy complications like [gestational diabetes](#), [preeclampsia](#), pre-term birth (before 37 weeks gestation), [pregnancy loss](#) (miscarriage or stillbirth), and chromosomal abnormalities like [down syndrome](#).

“You’re definitely going to be at higher risk for multiple pregnancy, twins or triplets for example,” Daugherty adds. “The older you get, the ovaries tend to kick out more eggs with ovulation.”

Planning for a later-in-life pregnancy begins with seeing a midwife or OBGYN before conception, Daugherty says. The provider may recommend reproductive assistance, like ovulation-inducing medication or surgery to ensure pregnancy and birth go as smooth as possible. A woman may also get non-invasive tests in the first trimester to check for genetic abnormalities.

Basic health tips apply, too.

“Eat healthy. Stop smoking if you smoke. Don’t drink any alcohol. Don’t use any drugs. Exercise regularly. Get enough sleep,” Daugherty says. “Keep your body at the most optimal health you can to make your chances better.”

A silver lining in the uncertainty: children of later-in-life pregnancies may end up living a fuller life.

“Parents [of an older age] are going to be much more financially stable, for the most part, and emotionally stable. You’re going to have more life experiences to build from,” Daugherty says. “And so they may just be in a better place mentally to be parents.”

If you’re thinking about having a child – no matter your age – visit the [OSF HealthCare website](#) to learn about resources.