

# 10 tips to prepare your body for a healthy pregnancy

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So, you're thinking of starting a family, how exciting! This is a huge milestone in your life.

While you may be prepared when it comes to your money matters, career, and lifestyle changes, that having a baby will bring; your body may not be prepared for the pregnancy.

You will be surprised to know that your reproductive health today is a result of your diet, lifestyle, and environment from two to three months prior. These three factors have a profound impact on your reproductive health. Therefore, to maximise your chances of conception and give your baby the best start in life, preconception care is important.

Provided below is a quick guide to the steps you can take to prepare your body for a healthy pregnancy.

## Preparing for a healthy pregnancy checklist

### 1. Stop the birth control.

You may consider this to be an obvious step. However, you must remember that every body is different. While some women will fall pregnant immediately, for others it may take months.

### 2. Know your fertile window.

If you haven't before, now is a good time to get familiar with your menstrual cycle. The average menstrual cycle is 28 days but can vary between 21 to 35 days. You can get various **fertility apps** on your mobile to help track your menstrual cycle and indicate your most fertile days. If your cycles are irregular, it may become difficult to track them. In which case, you may want to consider using ovulation tests or seeking further advice from your GP.

### 3. Get a health check

Even if you and your partner feel fit and healthy, it is strongly advised that you get a preconception checkup done. At this checkup your healthcare provider will go over the following.

- Your and your partner's health history and family history to determine if there are any risks of genetic issues being passed down.
- Your immunisation history. Ensuring you are caught up on these before you are pregnant.
- Run some blood tests to check your overall health and to rule out any potential genetic issues to the child such as Down's Syndrome.
- Ensure you are within the healthy weight range

### 4. Take vitamins and Folic Acid

#### Prenatal vitamins

You may have seen the **Elevit** advertisements on television or pop up on your mobile as you scroll through websites or your Facebook page. Prenatal vitamins provide your body with the extra boost it needs to avoid any nutritional deficiencies during pregnancy. Therefore, if having a baby is on your mind, now would be a good time to start taking prenatal vitamins so your body is ready for the pregnancy.

#### Folic Acid

Folic acid is probably another term you may have come across time and time again whenever pregnancy is mentioned. So, you may wonder what it is and why is it so important?

Folic acid is a vitamin found in leafy green vegetables (spinach, broccoli, cabbage etc.), fruits such as bananas and berries, and legumes and liver. It is an essential vitamin to prepare for a healthy pregnancy because it can reduce the chance of having a baby with neural tube defects such as spina bifida.

We recommend you take a folic acid supplement and increase your dietary intake of Folic acid at least one month before trying to conceive and continue it through to the first three months of your pregnancy.

Fathers also play a vital role in the pregnancy and the development of a healthy baby. Therefore, men should increase their intake of folic acid, zinc and vitamin C-rich foods and supplements before trying to conceive. These vitamins are essential for sperm quality, DNA, and production.

### 5. Eat a healthy balanced diet and get your body moving

Following a sensible diet and exercise plan is essential for the reproductive health of both men and women. So, it's time to get your body moving. Even if this means doing 30 minutes a day of moderate exercise. Don't forget to include plenty of lean protein, vegetables, and fruit in your diet to provide your body with the nutrition it needs for a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby.

### 6. Reduce your caffeine intake

Caffeine can affect the reproductive health of both men and women. In women, it can increase your risk of a miscarriage. While in men, it can affect the morphology (the structure) and motility of sperm.

Therefore, limiting your daily consumption of coffee to a maximum of two cups a day is advised. Also, don't forget that caffeine can come in different guises other than coffee. This includes chocolates, soft drinks, and energy drinks.

### 7. Reduce stress

Stress has become known as one of the leading causes of infertility. It can lead to irregular ovulation in women and a reduction in semen quality in men. Trying to conceive can sometimes become a stressful event in a couple's life.

Therefore, take time to relax and engage in activities that will help you destress, such as reading, yoga, a massage, or playing golf.

### 8. Avoid alcohol and recreational drugs

Both men and women should avoid alcohol and recreational drugs before and after conception. The consumption of these can lead to

- increased risk of miscarriage,
- birth-defects in the child
- medical problems in the mother,
- reduce the chance of live birth and
- affect sperm count and quality.

### 9. Keep away from toxins

Everyday environmental toxins and fumes surround us. However, if your job entails being surrounded by paint, fumes, or other toxins, you should speak with your doctor if you have any concerns.

### 10. Keep the sperm healthy

While there has always been an emphasis on the female's reproductive health, it is important to remember that men also play a vital role not only in conception but also in the baby's health.

Along with everything mentioned above, men can also do the following to keep their sperm healthy.

- **Keep them cool:** there is a reason the testes are outside the body and sperm is produced at a cooler temperature. Therefore, men should avoid any activities that will lead to overheating the sperm and affect the quality. Such activities include saunas, sitting with the laptop on your lap and even wearing tight trousers and jeans.
- **Regular ejaculation:** ejaculating every two days can help keep sperm healthy and motile. Contrary to belief, 'saving it up' can lead to DNA damage and poor quality and motility.

## We're here for you

Whether you are at the beginning of your family planning journey or are already pregnant, we are here for you. You can be confident that **Dr Kothari** and our team will provide you with the support you need to make suitable and informed choices for the benefit of you and your baby.

Call: 02 4225 1999

Email: [admin@wollongongObGy.com.au](mailto:admin@wollongongObGy.com.au)

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