

## FACT SHEET

# Pre Conception Care

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As a society, we tend to put a great deal of time and research into planning our weddings, purchasing our homes and other important milestones in our lives, but preparing for conception often does not receive the attention it should.

There is now overwhelming evidence to show that couples who have good nutritional status will conceive much more readily. Well nourished women are also less likely to experience miscarriages, or to develop iron deficiency anaemia, constipation, fatigue, and other common problems of pregnancy. Babies born to well nourished women are more likely to be born in robust health, to feed vigorously, to grow optimally, to be alert and responsive with no ongoing health problems.

### **How long before conception should I prepare?**

Ideally you both need to begin four months prior to conception. Sperm can take up to 116 days to develop and mature, during which time they are vulnerable to damage. Likewise the egg takes approximately 100 days to mature before ovulation.

Poor nutrition, tobacco, drugs, alcohol, environmental pollution, lack of exercise, stress, oral contraceptives, genito-urinary infections, and other infections eg Candida, allergies, child bearing at an older age and stress are all important factors which may be harmful to sperm, eggs, health of the male and female reproductive organs, general health of both parents, and in turn the health of the baby.

Previously there was more focus on diet and nutrition during pregnancy, however it is now known that pre-conception diet is even more important.

### **How do we prepare?**

We strongly recommend that you find a health care provider that is trained in Natural Fertility Management to assist you- to find a practitioner near you contact the Australian Traditional Medicine Society website [www.atms.com.au](http://www.atms.com.au) Alternatively purchase the book "Better Babies" by Janette Roberts & Francesca Naish.

When preparing to conceive, there are several factors to consider. We have summarised these for you.

- If ceasing the Oral Contraceptive Pill (OCP) you need at least 6 months to clear it from your system and normalise hormone levels. Statistics show women who conceive shortly after discontinuing the OCP have much higher rate of miscarriage and stillbirth. During this time use barrier methods of contraception such as condoms.

- Cease all medications such as antibiotics etc. This is where you will need to consult your healthcare professional. If you are sick and need treatment it is likely that you are not fit (yet) to conceive.
- Cease alcohol or any unnecessary drugs and minimise tea, coffee and other caffeinated drinks
- Exercise moderately for 30 minutes at least three times per week and aim to reduce your weight to the healthy weight range for your height and weight (both partners)
- Avoid exposure to chemicals, pesticides and other environmental toxins
- Follow the diet outlined below or in any good Pre-Conception Care book
- Take the supplements suggested by your health care professional including any herbs you may require to regulate your cycle
- Avoid conception until at least four months of being on this program

### **Essential Nutrients your body requires to conceive:**

- Betacarotene
- Vitamin B Complex:-
- Folic Acid
- Pantothenic Acid (B5)
- Thiamine (B1)
- Riboflavin (B2)
- Pyroxidine (B6)
- B12
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin D
- Vitamin E
- Essential Fatty Acids
- Calcium
- Zinc
- Magnesium
- Manganese
- Iron(if Iron levels are low due to anaemia, heavy periods etc)
- Selenium
- Chromium

You are unlikely to get all of these nutrients in one pregnancy multi vitamin. Whilst pregnancy multi vitamins are adequate, they generally don't contain the nutrients at the dosage levels practitioners would prescribe. Indeed you may require a higher dosage of some nutrients if your diet has been inadequate for some time. It is worth consulting your healthcare professional who will recommend a supplement regime that meets your own individual requirements.

Alternatively if you do wish to purchase your own supplemental vitamins and minerals, we recommend **Nature's Sunshine Supplemental Vitamins & Minerals (90 Tablets)** taken twice daily, which contains a broad range of essential nutrients.

## ZINC FOR MEN

Zinc is the most important nutrient for men to ensure a high sperm count and good sperm motility. A deficiency of zinc can lead to chromosomal abnormalities.

## DIET

Again this is only a brief summary

- Lean meats- preferably organic or hormone free (minimise red meat intake)
- Wholemeal breads and pastas
- Little if any sugar and salt
- Lots of fresh fruit and vegetables
- Avoid fried or processed foods/takeaways
- Seafood
- Drink 2-3 litres of filtered water per day
- Minimise dairy products (which can interfere with healthy cervical mucous production)- eat dairy free milks, yogurts etc as your source of calcium
- Lots of nuts and seeds
- High protein intake (your protein requirements increase by 15% during pregnancy)

Some foods reduce the chance of malformation in babies- these include:-

- Vegetable juices- particularly broccoli and green capsicum
- Any other juices- fruit or vegetable high in vitamin C and other antioxidants
- Milk ( must be low- fat)
- Vegetable Oils- supply essential fatty acids

## CONCLUSION

If you follow the above recommendations and adhere diligently to the diet and lifestyle recommendations as well as taking herbs to regulate your cycle (if required), you should find that you conceive within a few months.

Once your pregnancy is confirmed it is essential to continue with the same nutritious eating plan and supplements (unless told otherwise by your healthcare professional). You should experience an easy pregnancy and deliver a healthy baby who thrives from birth onwards.

If in spite of following the above recommendations, you have been unable to conceive after twelve months, we suggest you consult an infertility specialist for an evaluation of both yourself and your partner.