



PLaN

Planning for a healthy pregnancy

Lifestyle

Before you fall pregnant it is important to be as healthy as you can be. A healthy body and lifestyle mean a healthier start for your baby and can optimise your pregnancy. The following are a list of recommendations to consider before you fall pregnant. They may even assist you in falling pregnant.

- ❑ Healthy diet - a well balanced diet is important before, during and after your pregnancy. Furthermore, there are certain foods that should be avoided when you are pregnant. It is also important to observe good hygiene during food preparation
- ❑ Exercise - developing a regular exercise program before you fall pregnant means you will be more likely to continue. Exercise has positive benefits on your physical and mental health
- ❑ Healthy weight (recommended BMI range is 20-25). A BMI greater than 30 may increase risk of complications for you and your baby
- ❑ Quit smoking
- ❑ Consider your alcohol intake: no alcohol is recommended during pregnancy
- ❑ Recreational drugs - giving these up before you fall pregnant gives your baby the best start to life
- ❑ Caffeine - present in coffee, tea, cola, chocolate & energy drinks. Reduce daily intake to less than 200mg (equivalent to 1 to 2 espresso coffees)

Vitamin & Mineral Supplementation

There are many vitamin and mineral preparations specifically designed for pregnancy and breastfeeding. In particular, it is important you take 0.5mg folic acid from at least 1 month **before** you fall pregnant as much of baby's development is in the first few weeks when you may not even know you are pregnant. This can help prevent the birth defect spina bifida. Some women particularly those with diabetes, on special medications or who are overweight require a higher dose of folic acid ie 5mg: please check with your GP or PLaN midwife.

Due to widespread iodine deficiency in Australia, iodine supplementation is also recommended throughout pregnancy to help promote appropriate brain development. The recommended dose is 150mcg per day.

A well-balanced diet can provide you with most of the nutrients needed prior to and during pregnancy, Supplementation may be required for iron, vitamin B12, vitamin D and calcium if you are at specific risk of deficiency.

Medications

Certain medicines prescribed by the doctor or bought in the chemist or supermarket may not be safe while you are pregnant. We suggest you make a list of any regular medications and find out the safety of these from your local doctor or call MotherSafe before you fall pregnant. In making this list you should include all prescription medications that have been prescribed by a doctor as well as those you have bought from a chemist, supermarket and health food store or have been recommended by a naturopath.



Some herbal medicines, traditional medicines, homeopathy products and nutritional supplements may be harmful to you and your developing baby and it is important to check these before you fall pregnant.

While some medications are not considered safe when planning or during pregnancy, other medications are okay to continue during a pregnancy and can be of benefit to you and your baby, keeping you in good health for the pregnancy.

Immunisations & Blood Tests

You should know your vaccination status and immunity when you are planning a pregnancy. A simple blood test can reveal whether you have had immunisations and are immune to certain infections that otherwise could be harmful to a pregnancy.

Confirm that you (and your partner) are immune to the following:

- Rubella (German measles)
- Varicella (Chicken pox)

If you had the varicella vaccine, you do not need to have a blood test to confirm immunity. This is because immunity following vaccination is often not detectable using currently available blood tests. **Remember that you must wait 1 month before trying to get pregnant after receiving chickenpox and rubella vaccinations.**

The influenza vaccine and whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine are now given during pregnancy rather than before pregnancy. However if you are planning to be pregnant, it is reasonable to have the flu vaccine if it is available (seasonal).

Your doctor or midwife would also like to know that you are generally healthy before falling pregnant, so they may arrange other tests including:

- Thyroid function tests
- Fasting blood sugar levels and glycosylated haemoglobin (a test for diabetes)
- HIV
- Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C
- Screening for sexually transmitted infections
- Full blood count (for iron and thalassaemia screening)

Knowing this information in advance may help you sort out any problems before you fall pregnant.

Medical History

Your medical history is also important to consider when planning a pregnancy. Discuss with your doctor your medical history, in particular any of the following:

- Heart conditions
- Asthma/Respiratory Illness
- Endocrine/Hormone problems (including diabetes or thyroid problems) and Obesity
- Autoimmune disorders
- Migraine /Neurological problems (e.g. epilepsy)
- Kidney problems



- Mental illness (depression, eating disorders, anxiety, schizophrenia)
- Blood problems (bleeding or clotting problems)
- Gynaecological problems

Health Check-Ups

It is important to know that your general health is good before you fall pregnant. Even if you have no other medical conditions it is still important to have the following health checks up to date before falling pregnant:

- Women's health check-up - breast check and pap smear
- Dental check up
- Skin check

Family History

Knowing about the medical history of your family (both sides) can be beneficial when planning a pregnancy. It is also important to find out if there are any of the following problems in your family, specifically to do with pregnancy and reproduction:

- Birth defects
- Fetal abnormalities
- Developmental delay/learning problems
- Miscarriage or stillbirth
- Pregnancy complications
- Complicated labours

If you know you have a family history of a genetic disorder e.g. cystic fibrosis or muscular dystrophy- genetic testing may be available. It may take some time to obtain results from genetic tests, so allow yourself plenty of time to get results and information while you are planning your pregnancy. Spending a little time while planning may save a lot of stress once you are pregnant. If you ticked any of the above you should discuss this with your GP before you fall pregnant and you may be referred GP for genetic counselling or to other specialists for further discussion.

Social Situation & Mental Health

Pregnancy can also be an emotional time. Ensure you have some people and a GP you feel comfortable talking to so you can discuss anything bothering you and can let them know if things begin to feel overwhelming.

Have you considered the following issues?

Family & relationships

- Do you already have children?
- Have you and your partner discussed having children?
- Do you and your partner feel ready to start planning a pregnancy?
- Have you started trying to fall pregnant?
- Do you feel you have a good social support network (friends and family)?

Work, study & financial commitments

- Is your work/study environment suitable for pregnancy and return to work/study after your baby?
- Do you work?



NSW Medications in Pregnancy & Breastfeeding Service



- Does your partner work?
- Are you studying?
- Have you considered childcare options?

Mental health & wellbeing

- Do you or your partner have a history of anxiety and depression? It's important to seek help & manage it well prior to falling pregnant. Talk to your GP regarding management options.

Finally -it can take couples a while to fall pregnant. Relax and enjoy the time with your partner, knowing you have done everything you can to prepare for a healthy pregnancy. Good luck.

PlaN Clinics-See the **Planning Pregnancy** section of the MotherSafe website-
<https://www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/royal-hospital-for-women/services-clinics/directory/mothersafe> for dates and venues.

Further information regarding vaccination, smoking, diet and exercise, obesity and vitamin and minerals during pregnancy can be viewed in the factsheets on the MotherSafe website.

General Pregnancy References & Information Sources

- Royal Hospital for Women Sydney <https://www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/royal-hospital-for-women>
Ph: (02) 9382 6111
- MotherSafe: <https://www.seslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/royal-hospital-for-women/services-clinics/directory/mothersafe>
Ph: Sydney Metro (02) 9382 6539
NSW non-metro 1800 647 848
- MotherToBaby: www.mothersatobaby.org
- Centres for Disease Control and Prevention -Before pregnancy: <https://www.cdc.gov/preconception/index.html>
- Australian Government Department of Health: Immunisation for pregnancy <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation/immunisation-throughout-life/immunisation-for-pregnancy>
National immunisation information line Ph: 1800671811
- NSW Genetics Education: <http://www.genetics.edu.au/>
- NSW Health: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/Pages/default.aspx>
- Depression/Anxiety: www.beyondblue.org.au
Ph: 1300 224 636
- Mood Disorders: Black Dog Institute: <http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/>

Quit Smoking Resources

- QUIT Program <https://www.quit.org.au/> Ph: 137 848

Alcohol and Drug Information Service

- Alcohol Drug Information Service NSW www.yourroom.com.au Ph: 1800250015

Alcohol Guidelines

- Australian Government Guidelines: www.alcohol.gov.au
- Royal Hospital for Women Melbourne: Alcohol and pregnancy
<https://www.thewomens.org.au/images/uploads/fact-sheets/Alcohol-and-pregnancy-250818.pdf>

Nutrition & Food Safety

- Australian Food Standards: <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>
- NSW Food Authority: <http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/>

Social support

- Family planning: www.fpnsw.org.au
Ph: 1300 658 886
- Domestic Violence Line: Ph: 1800 656 463
- Telephone Interpreter Service: <https://www.tisnational.gov.au/> Ph:13 14 50

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For more information call MotherSafe: NSW Medications in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Service on 9382 6539 (Sydney Metropolitan Area) or 1800 647 848 (Non-Metropolitan Area) Monday -Friday 9am-5pm (excluding public holidays)