

ACHIEVING OPTIMAL FERTILITY WITH DIET



DIETARY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FERTILITY

Eating a balanced, whole food diet during the preconception period in addition to prenatal supplementation can enhance ovulation, aid conception and improve your pregnancy outcomes. Diet plays a role in ensuring ovulation occurs optimally by maintaining sex hormone balance. Once pregnant, consuming a healthy diet assists with the baby's growth and development. It also reduces pregnancy complications such as miscarriage, gestational diabetes and pre-eclampsia.

Here are some core aspects of a nourishing, balanced diet that supports fertility.

Whole foods - Consuming a varied diet consisting of fresh whole foods helps to ensure an adequate intake of the nutrients required for the development of healthy sperm and eggs. Limiting your intake of processed and packaged foods and increasing seasonal produce (organic, where possible) ensures a blend of vitamins and minerals for fertility.

Antioxidant-rich foods - Including a variety of antioxidant-rich foods in your diet helps to manage oxidative stress and mitigate its detrimental effects on fertility. Beyond general health, antioxidants have been shown to improve a wide range of conception outcomes including sperm quality and egg health.

Protein - Protein is essential for every cell. It's required for healthy egg and sperm production, for fertilisation and embryo development. The formation of your baby's organs and muscles also depend on protein. Assessing the quality and source of your protein is important during preconception.

Fats - Including all types of dietary fats before and during your pregnancy is important for hormone balance and energy production of the sperm and eggs. It's also vital for the development of the baby's nervous system, brain and cognitive function.

INDIVIDUALLY TAILORED PRECONCEPTION CARE PROGRAMS

An Preconception Care plan tailored to you may include:

- Dietary and lifestyle advice
- Nutritional and/or herbal supplementation
- Antenatal blood test screening
- Nutritional screening
- Hormone testing
- Food intolerance / sensitivity investigation
- Function medicine testing
- Education on cycle and ovulation tracking

TOP NUTRIENTS FOR FERTILITY



NUTRIENTS FOR OPTIMAL FERTILITY

Making these dietary changes three to four months prior to conception can positively influence your pregnancy and health overall. There are several specific nutrients that are important to aid fertility and improve pregnancy outcomes. These include:

Iron

During pregnancy, women require a higher daily intake of iron. It is helpful to ensure you have adequate iron levels in the preconception period to maintain this throughout pregnancy.

Foods rich in iron include red meat, dried lentils, cashews, spinach and tofu. Consuming vitamin C rich foods alongside non-meat iron sources can improve absorption.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D deficiency is common in Australia and is associated with an increased risk of infertility and pregnancy complications. When pregnant, vitamin D also plays a role in the health of the baby as it ensures appropriate levels of the nutrient in breast milk.

The best source of vitamin D is sunlight.

Folic Acid

Folic acid is well known to help prevent the risk of neural tube birth defects including spina bifida. The neural tube is formed very early on in pregnancy at the time most women don't know they are pregnant. This is why consuming folic acid as a supplement during the preconception period and for the first three months of pregnancy is recommended.

Folate-rich foods include spinach, broccoli, asparagus, eggs and legumes.

Iodine

An iodine deficiency can impact fertility by impairing the production of thyroid hormones. During pregnancy, the nutrient is also important as it can result in foetal cognitive development. Increased requirements are required as the body can't store iodine. Iodine supplementation is recommended during the preconception period and pregnancy.

Iodine-rich foods include: seafood and eggs

Zinc

Preconception care is not all about women. Zinc is an important male-specific nutrient for fertility as a deficiency has been linked to poor sperm quality. Zinc also plays a vital role in stress reduction.

Food rich in zinc includes red meat, oysters, dried split peas and cashew nuts.

SAMPLE PRECONCEPTION MEAL PLAN



BREAKFAST

- Rolled oat or quinoa porridge topped with raw nuts and seeds, and fresh berries
- Scrambled eggs with spinach and colourful veggies
- Natural yoghurt with granola and fresh fruit
- Seed bread with avocado and white bean smash
- Chia pudding with mango

LUNCH

- Fresh salad with roast chicken and colourful vegetables
- Veggie or meat broth with noodles
- Vegetable frittata with salad
- Whole food bowl
- Sardines on toasted seed bread
- Grilled salmon with steamed vegetables

DINNER

- Lean meat, chicken or fish with salad or steamed vegetables
- Italian casserole with steam vegetables and quinoa
- Homemade pizza with vegetables and chicken
- Zucchini fritters with avocado
- Baked sweet potato with a lentil chilli
- A roast with veggies

SNACKS

- Cut veggies and hummus
- Hard boiled eggs
- A piece of fresh fruit
- Small handful of raw nuts and seeds
- A homemade bliss ball

PRENATAL SUPPLEMENTATION

Pre-conception and pregnancy increases the demand for many nutrients. Supplementation is recommended to support both you and your baby.

As supplements vary in formulation and quality, it's important to seek the advice of your health professional. These can help to:

- Support the health of mothers
- Support the development of the baby
- Helps maintain healthy foetal CNS/brain development
- Support bone, connective tissue, hair, skin and nail formation
- Play a vital role in the synthesis of DNA
- Maintains maternal and preconception health