

PRECONCEPTION CARE FOR OPTIMAL FERTILITY



WHY PRECONCEPTION CARE IS IMPORTANT?

Maternal and paternal health before conception are both important as they can influence the genetic quality of the sperm and egg, and fertility outcomes. Preconception Care can help reduce the risk of pregnancy-related complications, assist the health and development of your unborn baby and help you recovery from birth.

Preconception Care typically refers to the three months leading up to pregnancy. This is because it takes about 100 days for sperm and egg formation and maturation. Ensuring you and your partner are as healthy as possible before you conceive will have a positive influence on your overall health and wellbeing and that of your baby's.

FACTORS AFFECTING FERTILITY

- Age
- Chronic stress
- Nutritional deficiencies
- Environmental toxin exposure
- Hormone dysregulation
- Alcohol and caffeine consumption
- Smoking
- Chronic inflammation
- PCOS
- Endometriosis
- Uterine fibroids
- Obesity
- Insulin resistance
- Diabetes
- Thyroid imbalances

REQUIREMENTS FOR CONCEPTION

Fertility is a reflection of paternal and maternal health and wellbeing. For normal conception to occur, there are several requirements including:

- Healthy ovulation and egg production.
- Production of healthy, viable sperm taking into account sperm numbers, motility, morphology & DNA integrity.
- Transportation of sperm and eggs within the genital tracts and fallopian tube.
- Fertilisation of the egg and the development of pre-embryo.
- The transportation of the fertilised egg and implantation in the uterus.

TIPS FOR IMPROVING FERTILITY OUTCOMES

Fertility outcomes depend on the health of both the female and male

There are many factors that influence fertility parameters, some of which you have no control over. However, there are several adjustments you can make during the preconception period that can improve your fertility outcomes and make pregnancy and more enjoyable experience.

TIPS FOR FEMALES

Stress:

Life and work stress coupled with the stress of trying to conceive can impact your fertility outcomes. Stress can cause hormone imbalances and disrupt normal ovulation. Implementing stress strategies such as meditation, yoga or journaling can be beneficial in reducing your overall stress levels.

Weight:

There is a clear relationship between fertility and weight. Being underweight or overweight decreases your fertility chances. Achieving a healthy weight can not only improve the rate of conception, but also enhance your pregnancy experience and the health of your child.

Exercise:

Exercise can assist you to reach your weight goals, reduce your stress and enhance your stamina for labour. Exercising prior to conception can also help you maintain a healthy weight during pregnancy and after delivery.

Smoking:

Smoking not only contributes to long-term health risks for mother and child, it is also one of the biggest contributing factors to infertility. Smoking also increases the risk of miscarriage, premature birth and low birth weight.

Alcohol:

Excessive consumption of alcohol can reduce your egg numbers and increase the risk of miscarriage and birth defects. It is recommended you reduce or eliminate alcohol during the preconception period, pregnancy and while breastfeeding.

Caffeine:

High consumption of caffeine including coffee, tea and energy drinks, can impact your fertility and increase your risk of miscarriage. Limiting your intake to a maximum of 1-2 cups a day is advised.

Recreational Drugs:

Recreational drugs can not only be detrimental to your health but also increase the risk of birth defects. Ceasing use is recommended

Toxins:

Overexposure to environmental toxins can increase our risk of miscarriage and birth defects. While we can't avoid all toxins, reducing your exposure and taking all safety measures can improve your fertility outcomes.

TIPS FOR MALES

Stress:

Regular stress has been found to reduce semen quality. Practising relaxation activities can be beneficial in helping keep you mentally fit.

Diet & Exercise:

Nutrients play an important role in male fertility. For example, zinc deficiency can lead to reduced testosterone levels and semen production. Maintaining healthy body weight is also important in order to produce quality sperm.

Overheating:

Overheating can affect semen production. It is recommended you avoid or reduce the use of hot spas & saunas, tight jeans & synthetic materials.

Smoking:

Smoking contributes to long-term health risks and is one of the biggest contributing factors to infertility. Research also shows smoking can reduce sperm quantity & quality.

Alcohol:

Excessive consumption of alcohol can make it harder to conceive by affecting sperm quality. It is recommended you reduce or eliminate alcohol during the preconception period.

Caffeine:

While caffeine can boost your sperm motility, high intake of including coffee, tea and energy drinks can decrease your fertility due to sperm DNA damage. Limiting your intake to 1-2 cups a day is recommended.

Recreational Drugs:

Recreational drugs can not only be detrimental to your health but also have an impact on sperm quality & quantity, in particular, marijuana.

Toxins:

Overexposure to environmental toxins can cause DNA damage to sperm. While we can't avoid all toxins, reducing your exposure & taking all safety measures can improve your fertility outcomes.

Frequency of Ejaculation:

Ejaculating regularly can help improve sperm health & motility. To enhance conception, it is advised you ejaculate every two days, especially when your partner is ovulating.