



Facts about...

PRE-PREGNANCY PLANNING

If you're planning to have a baby it is advisable to be well informed and prepared to provide the best care for yourself and your baby.



NUTRITION

It is important to have a well-balanced and nutritionally sound diet. Women should aim for normal weight before conception. A high fibre, low fat diet is the basis of good health. Eat freshly cooked or freshly prepared food.

This will also stand you in good stead for breast feeding once you have had your baby. Breast feeding is useful in furthering the mother child bond, and allowing maternal anti-bodies to help protect your baby's developing immune system.

FOLIC ACID

Folic acid reduces the risk of having a baby with a neural tube defect such as Spina Bifida. Those at high risk include those previously affected and those with a family history, diabetes or on anti-epileptic medication.

Folic acid supplements are advisable for all women. The recommended dosage is 0.5mg, and for those at high-risk 5mg, ideally 3 months prior to conception and

continuing throughout first trimester of pregnancy.

IODINE

An iodine supplement is recommended as it can be difficult to get enough in your diet if pregnant. Use iodised salt rather than plain sea salt. Iodine is also found in seaweed and fish. You should have 150-250mcg/day.

EXERCISE

Sensible, regular, non-contact exercise is important. Avoid high-level exercise and getting overheated (spa baths and saunas).

INFECTIONS

The baby can be affected by certain infections, especially in the early stages of pregnancy, so it is wise to try to reduce the risk of contracting these infections while trying to become pregnant and throughout the pregnancy. These infections include rubella, syphilis, toxoplasmosis, listeria, cytomegalovirus and HIV.

Rubella

Rubella (German Measles) acquired when you are pregnant is a big concern. Most women these days have been vaccinated and are probably immune but this immunity can wear off.

It is advisable to be tested before becoming pregnant and given the vaccine if not immune. It is advisable not to become pregnant within one month of being vaccinated.

Listeria

This is caused by bacteria which are wide spread in nature and can contaminate food. It has been found in many fresh and unprocessed foods such as unpasteurised milk, soft cheeses, cold processed meats, pate, raw seafood and smoked seafood.

The best advice is

- ✓ Avoid the above products.
- ✓ Carefully wash raw vegetables
- ✓ Thoroughly cook all foods of animal origin
- ✓ Reheat left over foods and ready-to-eat food until steaming hot
- ✓ Always thoroughly clean utensils after preparing uncooked food.

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Parovirus

Parvovirus (slapped cheek), acquired when pregnant is a concern. This infection is more common amongst children, and is spread by respiratory droplets. If you suspect you have been exposed, please talk to your doctor. Blood tests may be required. There is no immunisation against this virus.

Varicella

Varicella (Chicken Pox), acquired when pregnant, is also a concern. If you have had chicken pox infection then you should have natural immunity. This can be checked through a blood test. If you do not have immunity it is recommended that you become vaccinated before trying to conceive. This will require two vaccinations 1-2 months apart. It is advisable not to become pregnant within one month of having the second vaccination.

Toxoplasmosis

This is a parasite with a similar effect to listeria. It is acquired by close contact with infected cats or eating uncooked or undercooked meat. Pregnant women should get another person to clean cat litter boxes daily, wear disposable rubber gloves for handling soil likely to be contaminated with cats' faeces and carefully wash hands after gardening or handling raw meat.

SMOKING, ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

You should not smoke during pregnancy and ideally quit three months before conception. Avoid exposure to passive smoke.

The National Research Council advises against drinking alcohol before and during pregnancy. Stop other recreational drugs. Caffeine intake should be reduced or ceased.

It is safe to take paracetamol in pregnancy. Aspirin and ibuprofen should be avoided. For other over the counter drugs, please discuss with your pharmacist, your doctor or Mothersafe before taking.

GENETIC COUNSELLING

Genetic or developmental disorders need to be considered if there is a past obstetric history, a family history or advanced maternal age (generally considered over 37 years).

Genetic disorders include *thalassaemia*, *cystic fibrosis*, *haemophilia* and *Tay-Sachs disorder*. Your doctor will advise about testing of yourself and your partner.

Useful contacts:

www.sesiahs.health.nsw.gov.au
www.fpahealth.org.au
www.raisingchildren.net.au
Mothersafe: 9382 6539

Reference:

FPA Health
John Murtagh

CHECKPOINT SUMMARY

- ✓ Stop smoking
- ✓ Stop alcohol and other social drugs
- ✓ Reduce or stop caffeine intake
- ✓ Review current medications
- ✓ Follow a healthy diet
- ✓ Take folic acid for three months before conception
- ✓ Develop a good exercise routine
- ✓ Ensure rubella immunity
- ✓ Have a breast check and Pap Smear
- ✓ Eat freshly cooked and prepared food
- ✓ Consider genetic and family history
- ✓ Consider health insurance cover
- ✓ Visit the dentist

