



Helping Your Fertility

Female

Diet and Lifestyle

Healthy Diet

- A balanced diet is the most sensible approach to ensuring that essential vitamins & minerals are obtained. However, additional folic acid supplements are essential prior to conception. There are several widely available supplements for pregnant women which are suitable for pre-conception use. They should contain the required 400mcg of Folic Acid.
- Folic Acid taken 3 months prior to conception and up to 12 weeks of pregnancy has been shown to reduce the risk of having a baby born with Spina Bifida

BMI

- Maintain a healthy weight and BMI. Body Mass Index (BMI) is a calculation based on the weight you carry for your height. An optimal BMI between 18.5 - 25 is associated with the best chance of conceiving and having a healthy pregnancy. Being significantly underweight or overweight increases risks for mother and baby.
- Women who are not ovulating, or have no periods at all, may find that restoring their weight to the optimal range can restore ovulation and correct disturbances in their menstrual cycle.

Exercise

- Regular moderate exercise e.g., walking or swimming, three times weekly is advised.
- Avoid excessive physical activity. Too much vigorous physical activity can inhibit ovulation.

Nutrition Recommendations from our Dietitian

Nutritional / Lifestyle Do's

7 portions of fruit and vegetables each day. Eating different coloured fruits and vegetables offers different vitamins and minerals.

Increase intake of oily fish. E.g., kippers, mackerel, sardines, trout and salmon.

Choose healthy fats. Increase intake of mono and polyunsaturated fats e.g., nuts, seeds, avocados, rapeseed/olive oil and almond/peanut butter.

Choose wholegrains. E.g., wholegrain bread/pita/wrap, seeded/granary/spelt bread, oat/bran-based cereals, brown/long-grain/basmati rice, couscous, quinoa, white/brown pasta, rice noodles, sweet potato and new potatoes (with skin on).

Vitamin D, Folic Acid and Folate. E.g., Pregnacare, Preconception, Proceive.

Nutritional / Lifestyle Don'ts

Unhealthy Fats. Reduce the intake of trans and saturated fats e.g., fried food, takeaway, biscuits, cakes, pies, pastries, butter and lard.

Processed meat. Eat less processed meats e.g., sausages, ham, bacon and burgers.

Caffeine. Limit caffeine consumption to 1-3 cups of coffee per day, before and during pregnancy.

Alcohol. Excess alcohol consumption can affect female fertility, as well as harming the developing foetus. Women who are trying to conceive are advised to drink no more than one or two units of alcohol, no more than one or two times per week.

Smoking. Smoking tobacco has a proven adverse effect on your fertility. Smoking as little as two cigarettes a day has been associated with a reduction in fertility in women and has been shown to significantly reduce the success rates of fertility treatments, such as IVF.

Passive smoking may affect a woman's chance of conceiving too.

We would encourage you to consult your GP for support in stopping smoking.

For more information/advice from a registered dietitian that specialises in fertility please email the team at info@orlawalshnutrition.ie

Medical Problems

If you have any ongoing current medical problem or require medication, it is essential for you to review this and any possible implications for pregnancy with your relevant medical practitioner BEFORE you start trying to conceive. Certain prescriptions, over the counter medications or supplements & other complimentary treatments may not be suitable for conception and pregnancy. Please consult your advising GP or Consultant.

Some medical conditions that can put women at increased risk of fertility problems include:

- Infrequent or no periods
- Endometriosis
- Polycystic ovaries
- Family history of early menopause
- History of chlamydia, herpes or genital warts
- Pelvic surgery e.g., for ovarian cysts, fibroids, cone biopsy
- Abdominal surgery for bowel problems e.g., Crohn's disease, ruptured appendix

Additional Requirements & Advice when Planning for Pregnancy

Ensure that you are registered with the National Cervical Screening programme and that you have an up-to-date normal cervical smear. Ensure that you are immune to Rubella. If you are not immune, arrange for the necessary vaccination and follow up with your GP.

NUTRITIONAL / LIFESTYLE DO'S & DON'TS

