



Planning to have a baby? PRE-PREGNANCY HEALTH CHECKLIST

Please take a copy of the checklist below to help plan for your pregnancy.

- Check that you are up to date with your **immunisations**:
 - German measles** (rubella) can cause malformations in your baby including deafness and blindness if caught in the first 3 months of pregnancy. Even if you have been vaccinated in the past, you should check that you are still immune since immunity can decrease over time and revaccination may be needed.
 - Whooping cough** (pertussis) can cause serious infection and even death in babies less than 6 months of age. *(Mothers were found to be the main source of whooping cough in newborns)*
 - Chickenpox** (varicella) infection during pregnancy can cause serious illness in a woman, her unborn baby or her newborn child. Generally a history of having had chickenpox or shingles will mean that vaccination is not needed.
 - Flu** (influenza) vaccination is recommended if a woman will be in the second or third trimester of pregnancy during the influenza season.
 - Pneumococcal** infection can be serious in those who have a chronic disease e.g. heart, kidneys, lung or diabetes. Smokers should also consider having a pneumococcal vaccination.
- Make sure your pap smear is up to date.** Changes on the cervix can be difficult to treat during pregnancy, so a normal pap smear is a great start. At the same time, your doctor can check for sexually transmitted infections such as **Chlamydia** and **Gonorrhoea**, which are easily treated but could cause problems in pregnancy.
- Take a daily folate supplement.** Folate (folic acid) is present in leafy green vegetables and whole grains, and is essential for the baby's developing brain and spinal cord. Many women don't get enough folate in their diet to protect their baby from problems such as spina bifida. It is recommended that all women who may become pregnant take extra folate, ideally for at least one month before becoming pregnant, and for the first three months of pregnancy.
- Limit caffeine before getting pregnant.** High caffeine intake, over 300 mg per day (about 3-4 cups of coffee) has been linked to slightly increased risk of miscarriage and low birth weight. Don't forget that some colas and other soft drinks contain appreciable amounts of caffeine.
- Stop smoking, avoid social drugs (e.g marijuana, ecstasy) and limit alcohol intake.** Smokers take longer to fall pregnant, and have more miscarriages, premature babies and stillbirths. Alcohol should be avoided completely once you know you are pregnant, as it may cause brain damage in the baby. Recreational drugs can cause a wide variety of problems during pregnancy and in newborn infants.
- Enjoy a balanced diet** of foods rich in calcium, iron and folate such as milk and other dairy foods, fruit and vegetables, cereals, wholegrain breads, beans and lentils. Multivitamins are not a substitute for a healthy diet, though specific pregnancy vitamin supplements may be helpful especially if you have dietary restrictions.
- See your dentist for a check-up.** Tooth X-rays and fillings are best done before a pregnancy. Poor dental hygiene and gum inflammation can increase the risk of premature birth.
- If you have any ongoing health problems, see your GP first.** Some conditions such as diabetes or thyroid problems need special attention before trying to get pregnant. Let your GP help with preparing for a pregnancy.
- If you are taking regular medications, make sure they are safe during pregnancy.** Even certain vitamin supplements, herbal medicines or acne treatments can cause problems during pregnancy. Make sure that anything you take has been checked by your GP or pharmacist.
- Get moving with moderate exercise.** Women who are in a healthy weight range find it easier to become pregnant, and have fewer problems during pregnancy and birth. Exercises such as walking, swimming and cycling are fine to continue into pregnancy. Some sports such as scuba diving and waterskiing are risky when you are pregnant, so discuss any concerns with your doctor or midwife.
- Check your health insurance.** If you plan to attend a private hospital and see a private obstetrician or midwife, make sure you have the level of cover you need. Most insurers require you to be a member for 12 months prior to your baby being born.
- Talk to your family about any history of genetic disorders** to determine if you could pass on an inheritable disease to your child. Discuss any concerns with your GP who can refer you to a genetic counsellor.



Sexual Health &
Family Planning
Australia

Leading the way in sexual and reproductive health

sanofi pasteur

The vaccines division of sanofi-aventis Group
Macquarie Park (NSW)

Looking after yourself before getting pregnant leads to healthier, happier mums and babies. For more information visit www.whoopingcough.com.au or see your GP or nearest Family Planning Clinic.