

THINKING ABOUT PREGNANCY?

If you are planning to get pregnant there are a few things to think about before you go ahead.

Are you as fit as you could be?

- Pregnancy puts additional demands on the body so it helps to be as fit as possible before you get pregnant e.g. eat healthily, not be overweight, stop smoking, take plenty of exercise and reduce alcohol, better still no alcohol. Excessive consumption of alcohol causes abnormalities in babies.
- If you are diabetic it is important your sugar control is excellent prior to conception.
- If you are taking any medication or have a chronic illness it is advisable to talk to your doctor before getting pregnant.

When to stop contraception.

- If you are taking the contraceptive pill. Stop the pill and wait 1 month before trying to conceive. Your fertility will return soon after stopping the pill.
- If you are using the injection or implants, wait for 1 month prior to trying to conceive. It can take up to a year for your fertility to return after stopping these forms of contraception.
- If you have a coil. The coil should be removed during a period (we know you are definitely not pregnant & the IUD is easier to remove at this time). Wait for one period prior to trying to conceive.

How long will it take to get pregnant?

- This varies enormously from person to person. Age is important. The older you are the less likely you are to get pregnant straight away.
- 8 out of 10 couples get pregnant within a year.
- We do not refer anyone under the age of 35 for fertility investigations before 1 year of trying unless there is a medical reason for poor fertility.

Rubella.

- It is important to have your immunity to Rubella (German measles) checked prior to conceiving. Most women are immune to this through vaccinations in childhood but this is not guaranteed. If you contract Rubella in pregnancy this can be very serious for the unborn child. If you are not already immune you will need a vaccination and then have to wait 3 months prior to trying to conceive. It is therefore best to consider this well in advance. The nurses will be happy to do the blood test required to check this.

- There are no other tests you need prior to getting pregnant if you are otherwise fit & well

Folic acid

- Taking folic acid prior to conception and for the first 12 weeks of pregnancy has been shown to significantly reduce the incidence of spina bifida. The dose is 400mcg a day and can be bought at any chemist.

Other dietary supplements

- Not all vitamin and minerals are beneficial and some are harmful to the unborn child, for example vitamin A. If you want to take vitamins, buy the formulations that are specifically prepared for pregnancy, these usually include 400mcg of folic acid.

Diet

- It is important to eat a well balanced diet before and during pregnancy. The unborn child in particular needs calcium for bone production, found in milk and dairy products.
- A vegetarian diet is fine as long as it is well balanced and includes pulses, dairy products and eggs.
- **Alcohol** it is harmful to the baby before and post conception if you drink more than 1-2 units per week. This is particularly true in the first 12 weeks.

When do you need to see the Doctor?

- The pregnancy tests done at the surgery are the same as those you buy in the chemist. A positive test therefore means you are pregnant. We do not do routine pregnancy tests at the surgery.
- We count the 40 weeks of pregnancy from the first day of your last period. It is a good idea to see the doctor or midwife in the first 8 weeks, as some of the antenatal screening tests for Downs need to be arranged to be done when you are 11-13 weeks.
- As long as we know you are pregnant the midwife will arrange an appointment with you for when you are about 12 weeks. At this appointment she will discuss how we plan your antenatal care, take blood tests, arrange your scan (for 20 weeks), let you know about antenatal classes and discuss any of your concerns.
- National Child Birth Trust (NCT) classes are private and book up early. If you want to go to these classes contact the NCT soon after you discover you are pregnant (**contact number – 01225-483343**). NHS classes can be booked through the midwife. They usually start after 30 weeks but need to be booked in advance.

When can you tell your friends & family?

- Anytime! However miscarriages are not uncommon and usually occur in the first 12 weeks. Unless you want to include other people in your excitement & then disappointment it is advisable to not let the news spread too far before 12 weeks.

Useful weblinks

National Childbirth Trust <http://www.nctpregnancyandbabycare.com/>

Antenatal screening tests <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/en.aspx?articleID=666>

The National Society for epilepsy
<http://www.epilepsynse.org.uk/pages/info/leaflets/preg.cfm>

Diabetes UK Pregnancy. <http://www.diabetes.org.uk/pregnancy>