

# Handy hints for making babies



A range of lifestyle factors may help enhance your fertility and chances of conceiving.

## For women

### Have a BMI of 20 – 25

- A healthy body mass index (BMI) is associated with better fertility.
- Pregnancy in overweight women is associated with problems such as diabetes and high blood pressure.
- Eat healthily and undertake moderate exercise regularly.

### Don't smoke or do drugs

- Smoking halves the chances of conceiving each month and can also double the chance of miscarriage.

### Take folic acid

- Take folic acid supplements when trying to get pregnant and up to 12 weeks into the pregnancy.
- Folic acid can help reduce the chances of spina bifida by up to 92%. Other minerals and supplements may also be useful.
- Use iodised salt, as iodine is necessary for fetal brain development.
- Avoid products containing Vitamin A.

### Reduce alcohol and caffeine

- Caffeine may reduce your chances of conceiving.
- There is no safe limit of alcohol during pregnancy, so it's best avoided.

### Medication

- Discuss all your medications with your doctor.

### Rubella

- Make sure you have had a rubella immunisation. Rubella can damage unborn babies.

### Chicken pox

- Find out if you have had chicken pox. If not, consider immunisation.

## For men

### Don't smoke or do drugs

- Smoking and some recreational drugs can reduce sperm quality.

### Reduce alcohol

- Decrease your alcohol intake to 20 units or less a week. Alcohol has also been shown to affect fertility.

### Have a normal BMI

- Keep active and stay slim. Obese men have sperm counts on average 22% lower when compared to their slimmer counterparts.
- Have a body mass index (BMI) below 28.

### Keep testes cool

- Wear boxer shorts, not briefs, this helps the testes to keep cool.
- Men in sedentary jobs can have poorer quality sperm because their testes are more prone to heating up. Keep your laptop off your lap!
- Don't have a hot bath, sauna or spa too frequently.

### Have a healthy diet

- Eat a diet with lots of healthy antioxidants. Foods rich in antioxidants can reduce the damage that chemicals called free radicals can have on sperm.
- Antioxidants are found in fresh vegetables, fruit, nuts, seeds, green tea and dark chocolate.
- Health supplements, such as Menevit, containing antioxidants such as Vitamin C and E may help to improve sperm quality.

### Medication

- Discuss all your medications with your doctor.