



8-point fertility checklist

Having a baby is one of the most important times in your life. So, it's important to ensure that you and your partner are in optimum health. Making a few lifestyle and nutritional changes now will not only help boost your chances of conceiving but may also help to give your unborn baby a good start in life.

And remember it's not only a woman's responsibility – men need to do their fair share too! So, here to help you on your way is the 8-point fertility checklist.

1 - A good diet

Both mums and dads-to-be should make sure they're eating a healthy well-balanced diet. A poor diet is known to affect both the quality and quantity of a man's sperm - men should ensure they are eating plenty of foods rich in vitamin C and zinc (found in baked beans, lean mince meat and dairy produce). Both men and women's diet should include plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, protein-rich food such as fish, poultry or pulses, and whole grains. Now is the time for both of you to quit the junk food!

2 - Take a supplement

It's not always easy to get all the right vitamins and minerals through diet alone whilst trying to conceive, so you may want consider a pre-pregnancy supplement.

3 - Timing & Lying

The day you ovulate and those days immediately before and after are the best times to conceive, as your eggs can only survive 12-24 hrs after release, whereas sperm can survive for 3-5 days inside the cervix, womb and fallopian tubes. Your most fertile day is 14 days before the first day of your next period. Many women think it's 14 days since their last period and count forward but this is wrong – you need to count back. If you have a regular cycle this is easy to calculate but if your cycle is irregular it becomes very difficult. And, ideally you should be having intercourse two days before this day, on the day, and 2 days after.

After intercourse do not get up and go to the loo. Lie in bed as long as possible as this gives sperm a chance to find the cervix, work their way up through the interior of the womb, and spread into both fallopian tubes.

4 - High anxiety and stress

High anxiety and stress levels are known to affect fertility. So if you're working hard, staying up late or constantly trying to meet high-pressured deadlines, make positive changes to reduce some of the stresses in your life. Why not think about taking a yoga class, use a relaxation CD or go for a long walk.

5 - Smoking & alcohol

Excessive alcohol intake and smoking are bad news for a healthy sperm production. So both you and your partner should quit smoking and say goodbye to those party nights.

6 - Exercise

Take regular gentle exercise. Why not try walking, swimming or cycling.

7 - Drugs and medication

If you or your partner need to take any medication make sure you tell you're GP that you're trying for a baby.

8 - Discussing the issues

And last but not least, before you both start actively "trying", it is important to discuss some of the issues that could arise from having a baby. E.g. how will a child change your lifestyle, what are your attitudes to raising a child, will either of you give up work and how will you cope financially?

A wide range of women's health resources are available at www.healthywomen.org.uk

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