



UCL EGA
Institute for
Women's
Health



UCL

Thinking of having a baby

– now or in the near future?

7

**steps
before pregnancy**

to help you & your baby

A Healthy Start in Life...

It is important for women and people able to carry a pregnancy, and their partners, to be as healthy as possible **before** trying to get pregnant.

Being healthy **before** trying to get pregnant means a better chance of getting pregnant and a healthier pregnancy and baby.

For the baby, it means less risk of being born too soon or with serious disabilities, such as Spina Bifida (a spine development problem).

1



Start taking folic acid tablets

Start taking folic acid about two months **before** you start trying to get pregnant. Continue to take it for the first 3 months of pregnancy. This lowers the risk of the baby having spina bifida by 70%. Most women need one tablet a day. Women with diabetes or obesity need a higher dose. If you are taking any vitamins, supplements or alternative therapies check with your doctor first.

Consider: Take folic acid every day.

For further information visit:
www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information

2



Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables (aim for 5 portions a day)

What you eat **before** you get pregnant affects the growth, development, and long-term health of the baby. A healthy diet can also increase the chance of getting pregnant.

Consider: What might be your first step to eating more fruit and vegetables?

Important for sperm health 

3



Exercise each week

Women who do regular, moderate physical activity **before** pregnancy get pregnant quicker and have a healthier pregnancy and birth. Aim for 2.5 hours each week of moderate activity such as cycling, swimming or brisk walking, and strength exercises like yoga or pilates twice a week.

Consider: What activities would you enjoy doing?

For further information visit:
www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/

Important for sperm health 

4



Reduce or stop smoking

Smoking is the biggest cause of pregnancy problems, including miscarriage and stillbirth. If you smoke **before** pregnancy, it can take longer to get pregnant.

Consider: Use a stop smoking app.

For further information visit:
www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/

Important for sperm health 

5



Get closer to a healthy weight

Being overweight or underweight **before** pregnancy can cause health problems in pregnancy and affect the future health of the baby. It can also take longer to get pregnant.

Consider: There are lots of ways to lose weight, what would help you?

For further information visit:
www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/

Important for sperm health 

6



Quit alcohol & recreational drugs and limit caffeine

Alcohol and recreational drugs can harm the baby and too much caffeine **before** pregnancy can increase the risk of miscarriage. Taking these substances can also make it harder to get pregnant.

Consider: How you can quit altogether or cut down?

For further information visit:
www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information

Important for sperm health 

7



Speak to your GP several months **before** you or your partner are trying to get pregnant if...

You have any existing physical or mental health conditions or are taking regular medications.

Check your vaccinations are up to date, particularly the MMR vaccine against Rubella as this infection can be dangerous to an unborn baby.

Consider: Do you need to see your GP?



UCL EGA
Institute for
Women's
Health



UCL



For further information, please visit:

www.tommys.org/pregnancy

www.nhs.uk/live-well