

Be Fit and Healthy before you start a Baby

By the time you are three months pregnant, your own tiny baby will already have a human shape. To give your baby the best chance of a health start, it is best for both parents to be fit and healthy before pregnancy begins.

In the countdown to Pregnancy what do you both need to check?

10 Give Yourselves Time

Allow three to six months to prepare yourselves. If you have been pregnant before, wait at least nine to twelve months after the birth of one baby before trying for another. Make a note of the dates of your periods. Then when you become pregnant, it will be easier to work out the date your baby will be due.

9 Eat Good Food

Every day eat foods from the four groups: (1) Meat and alternatives (2) Bread and cereals (3) Vegetables and fruit (4) Milk and milk products. Eat unrefined foods such as wholemeal bread and wholegrain cereals. Eat some fresh foods every day - fresh vegetables, both raw and cooked.

8 Check you are not too Thin or very Fat

Check your weight with your doctor. Correct any weight problem with good food and exercise. Do not go on a crash diet or starve yourself to keep thin.

7 Protect your Baby from Infections

German measles (Rubella) can damage a baby in the early stages of pregnancy. Check you're immune. Infections of the sex organs and organs which make urine can also harm an unborn baby. If you have an unusual discharge or if either of you have risked infection, see your doctor or phone the district hospital and ask for the GU Department. Treatment is fully confidential.

6 Check Contraception

Come off the Pill. Instead, use another method of contraception such as the cap or sheath for three months before you stop and try for a baby. Ask the Family Planning Nurse.

5 See your Doctor about Drugs and Disorders

Do **not** take any drugs or medicines until you have checked with your doctor that they are necessary and safe to take during pregnancy. Discuss any worries or minor health problems. Ask for advice if you have a long-term medical condition or if there is a disorder in the family, which might be inherited. If you are due

to have an x-ray, tell the doctor if there is any possibility you might be pregnant. If you are a blood donor, stop giving blood now until after your pregnancy.

4 Stop Smoking

Smoking can damage a man's sperm. Smoking is also harmful to a woman before pregnancy and can damage a baby during pregnancy. If you smoke, cut down now and aim to stop before trying for a baby.

3 Cut down Drinking

Too much alcohol can damage an unborn baby. When you stop using contraceptives, cut alcohol out or cut down to no more than one drink on any one day. Too much alcohol could damage a man's sperm so it is best for a man to drink moderately in the months before starting a baby.

2 Have enough Exercise and Rest

To be fit and healthy, you need moderate exercise daily as well as time for rest and relaxation.

1 Check any Dangers at Work

Ask at work if either of you think there may be hazards to health. If you work with chemicals or toxic substances you may need to take special precautions before as well as during pregnancy.