



UCL EGA  
Institute for  
Women's  
Health



**UCL**

# Thinking of having a baby?

**7**

**steps  
before pregnancy**

**to help you & your baby**

# A Healthy Start in Life...

It is important for women and for men to be healthy **before** getting pregnant.

Being healthy before conceiving means a better chance of getting pregnant and a healthier pregnancy.

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

Taking folic acid for two months **before** you get pregnant and for the first 3 months of pregnancy 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](http://www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information)

# 2



## Eat more fruit and vegetables (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?

**Good for sperm health** 

# 3



## Exercise each week

Women who do regular, moderate exercise 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/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/)

**Good for sperm health** 

4



## Quit or reduce smoking

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

**Consider:** Use a stop smoking app.

**For further information visit:**  
[www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/)

**Good for sperm health** 

5



## Get closer to a healthy weight

Being overweight or underweight 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/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/)

**Good for sperm health** 

6



## Quit alcohol, caffeine, and recreational drugs

Alcohol and recreational drugs can harm the baby and caffeine 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](http://www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information)

**Good for sperm health** 

7



## Speak to your GP several months **before** getting pregnant if...

You have any health conditions like depression, diabetes, epilepsy or high blood pressure or are taking regular medication.

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?



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