

Tips to prepare your body for a healthy pregnancy

Did you know? If you're thinking about starting a family, making small changes to your diet and lifestyle now can have a big impact on your baby-to-be in the future. Did you know? If you're thinking about starting a family, making small changes to your diet and lifestyle now can have a big impact on your baby-to-be in the future. You may know about the importance of eating well and healthy weight gain while you're pregnant, but did you realize that there are things you can do for your future baby before you even conceive? Taking care of your baby-to-be begins with taking care of yourself. Nearly 50% of pregnancies are unplanned and you might be pregnant for days or weeks before you realize, so it's a good idea to get an early start on good prenatal nutrition by making changes before you're pregnant. Folic acid is an important vitamin that helps your baby's spine and brain to develop, and is crucial in the early days after conception (when you might not even know you're pregnant). The wise woman's guide to preparing for a healthy pregnancy:

- Strive for healthy pregnancy weight gain
- Follow Canada's Food Guide and eat a varied and well-balanced diet
- have plenty of vegetables and fruits, whole grains, and protein foods.
- Take a prenatal multivitamin with at least 0.4 mg of folic acid every day. This can help reduce the risk of your baby developing a neural tube defects. Some women may need more folic acid. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have questions.
- Stop smoking and drinking alcohol. There are no safe limits when it comes to drinking alcohol so it's safest to cut it out completely.
- Limit high amounts of caffeine.

Making diet and lifestyle choices before you conceive can promote your health in readiness for pregnancy, as well as influence the lifelong health, growth, and development of your future baby, explains Dr. Sanjeev Ganguly, pediatrician and Head of Medical Affairs at Nestlé Nutrition. Sources Chavarro JE, Rich-Edwards JW, Rosner BA et al. Diet and lifestyle in the prevention of ovulatory disorder infertility. *Obstet Gynecol* 2007; 110:1050-8. Homan G, Litt J, Norman RJ. The FAST study: Fertility Assessment and advice Targeting lifestyle choices and behaviours: a pilot study. *Hum Reprod* 2012; 27(8):2396-404. IOM (Institute of Medicine) and NRC (National Research Council). *Weight Gain During Pregnancy: Reexamining the Guidelines*. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2009. Lassi, ZS, Imam AM, Dean SV et al. Preconception care: caffeine, smoking, alcohol, drugs and other environmental chemical/radiation exposure. *Reprod Health* 2014; 11(Suppl 3):S6. doi:10.1186/1742-4755-11-S3-S6. Ramakrishnan U, Grant F, Goldenberg T et al. Effect of women's nutrition before and during early pregnancy on maternal and infant outcomes: A systematic review. *Paediatr Perinat Epidemiol* 2012;26(Suppl. 1):285-301. Sharma R, Biedenharn K, Fedor J et al. Lifestyle factors and reproductive health: taking control of your fertility. *Reprod Biol Endocrinol* 2013; doi: 10.1186/1477-7827-11-66 Singh S, Sedgh G, Hussain R. Unintended pregnancy: worldwide levels, trends, and outcomes. *Stud Fam Plann*. 2010; 41(4):241-50. Temel S, vanVoortst S, Jack B et al. Evidence-based preconceptional lifestyle interventions. *Epidemiol Rev* 2014; 36:19-30. Last revised: August, 2016