

Catherine Street Medical Centre

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Planning to Become Pregnant

This is a check-list of advice if you are planning to become pregnant, or have just become pregnant.

The aim is to reduce harm to the baby, and reduce the risk of pregnancy complications.

THINGS YOU SHOULD DO:

- Take folic acid from before you get pregnant, ideally from when you plan to become pregnant until 12 weeks of pregnancy.
Most women 400 mcg per day – BUT – if you have an increased risk of having a baby with a spinal cord problem you need 5mg per day (discuss with your doctor for more information).
Examples – Previously affected pregnancy, you /partner have a spinal cord defect, on medication for epilepsy, Obesity, Coeliac disease / Diabetes.
- Take Vitamin D supplements when you become pregnant
- Have blood tests to check if you are immune against rubella and to screen for Hepatitis B, Syphilis and HIV.
- Eat a healthy diet. Include foods rich in iron, calcium and folic acid, also some oily fish.
- Have strict food hygiene, eg wash hands after handling cats and before preparing food.

THINGS TO AVOID:

- Too much Vitamin A- eg liver / supplements.
- Listeriosis – do not eat undercooked meat, eggs, soft cheese , pate, shellfish , raw fish , or unpasteurised milk.
- Fish which may contain alot of mercury – shark, marlin, swordfish, excess tuna.
- Cat poo, cat litters, raw meat , may contain certain infections.

THINGS TO STOP / CUT DOWN ON:

- Caffeine in tea, coffee, coke etc. – no more than 200g per day eg 2 mugs of instant coffee/ 5- g bar of chocolate/ 2 ½ mugs tea.
- Do not drink alcohol
- Do not smoke- Poisonous chemicals pass to the baby's blood and affect growth, the risk of having a miscarriage, premature birth / still birth is higher if you smoke.
- No illicit drugs

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Immunisation against Hep B if you are at risk.
- Immunisation against chicken pox if you are a healthcare worker and have not previously had chicken pox so are not immune.
- Your medication – including herbal and over the counter medicines – are they safe?
- Your work environment – Is it safe?
- Medical conditions in yourself /in your family.

OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY:

This is important +++ - this is a common poorly managed problem!

- Try to lose some weight before you get pregnant.
- There is a greater risk of pregnancy complications e.g. pre – eclampsia, still birth and the need for caesarean section compared with women who are not over weight.
- Eat a healthy balanced diet rich in iron, calcium and folic acid.
- In general the less processed the foods i.e. the less you eat from a packet / can / takeaway! the better.
- Eat healthily, reduce portion sizes and exercise.

Please refer to Planning to Become Pregnant | Health print | Patient.co.uk for further information.

GOOD LUCK AND BEST WISHES !

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