

# Preconception checklist for women



**Giving your baby the best start in life begins with focusing on your own health first. There are many ways to improve your health Before the Baby Bump.**

Here's a simple checklist to help improve your own health, and get ready for pregnancy.

- ☐ Maintain a healthy weight
- ☐ Move more, sit less.
- ☐ Enjoy a healthy diet
- ☐ Start taking folic acid and iodine supplements
- ☐ Limit caffeine to 200mg/day
- ☐ Quit smoking tobacco or vaping
- ☐ Stop drinking alcohol and avoid recreational drugs
- ☐ Get a dental check-up
- ☐ Book yourself in for a sexual health check
- ☐ Manage pre-existing health conditions
- ☐ Book a check-up with your General Practitioner
- ☐ Reduce your exposure to harmful chemicals
- ☐ Check your vaccination status

## Key tips

### Healthy weight

A healthy weight increases your chance of having a healthy baby. Living with overweight, obesity or underweight can increase risks such as Gestational Diabetes Mellitus and unhealthy birth weight.

### Move more, sit less

Regular exercise or movement can help increase fertility and optimise physical health, mental health and support healthy weights. Aim to move for at least 30 minutes each day, which can include a combination of aerobic (e.g. walking, running or dancing), resistance (weights or strength-based) or flexibility training (e.g. yoga, gymnastics or Pilates). Any activity that gets you huffing and puffing counts as good movement.

Sedentary behaviour, such as sitting or lying down are associated with poorer long term health outcomes. To minimise, or break up long periods of sitting, try scheduling a walking meeting at work, using a standing desk, or standing up for commercial breaks or in between episodes.

### Enjoy a healthy diet

A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, wholegrains, dairy, and lean proteins can boost your chances of having a healthy baby. Using the [five food groups](#) as a guide, choose meals based around vegetables, wholegrains and lean proteins (meat or dairy) with snacks focused on fruit, nuts, seeds or dairy. Healthy eating does not have to be complicated; fresh, whole foods help to give your body the vitamins, minerals, and energy it needs.

When grocery shopping, check food labels and pick items with fewer than five ingredients. Avoid foods where sugar (or an alternative such as maple syrup or rice syrup), fat, or salt (sodium) are the first three ingredients.

### Supplements

Start taking folic acid (400-500mcg per day) & iodine (150mcg per day). Folic acid and iodine can prevent neural tube defects and support healthy baby development. Future mums are recommended to start taking these supplements as soon as you are trying for a baby, as the neural tube develops in the first weeks of pregnancy.

### Quit smoking tobacco or vaping

Smoking tobacco and vaping harm your own health, the quality of your eggs and reduce fertility. Quitting is one of the best things you can do for your future baby. Talk to your health professional to access the best support for you, to help you quit for good.

### Caffeine

Large amounts of caffeine can increase risk of miscarriage or still birth. Future mums should monitor caffeine intake, which includes being mindful of consumption of coffee, tea and other sources such as energy drinks or cola beverages, or other stimulants such as Guarana, that work in a similar way to caffeine. Keep intake under 200mg daily; which is approximately 1 shot of espresso, 2 cups of instant coffee or 4 cups of tea.

### Stop drinking alcohol and avoid drugs

Drinking alcohol or using recreational drugs impacts your own health and reduces the quality of your eggs. Making the switch to non-alcoholic drinks and talking to a health professional will help ensure you have the right supports in place to create a healthy home for your future baby.

### Book yourself in for a sexual health check

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) often don't cause symptoms, but if left untreated can lead to infertility. Most can be easily treated with antibiotics if caught early. Book a visit with your GP or at a local sexual health clinic.

### Plan a visit to your dentist

Gum disease can affect pregnancy and the health of your baby. Plan a visit your dentist Before the Baby Bump.

### Manage any health conditions

Chronic conditions like Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), diabetes or high blood pressure can impact your physical health and pregnancy outcomes. Medications taken to manage physical or mental health can also impact pregnancy. Talk to your GP about your health concerns and medications Before the Baby Bump.

### Environmental chemicals

Environmental toxins can come from a variety of sources such as air or water pollution, paint, cleaning or gardening chemicals or industry-related occupations. Discuss any concerns you have about potential exposure to toxins with your GP.

### Book a check-up

Visit your GP so they can support you and discuss your Before the Baby Bump Checklist. This will help make sure you are in the best health before trying for a baby. Preparing your body now can make a big difference later.

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*Before the Baby Bump is an initiative of the Queensland Government, delivered by Health and Wellbeing Queensland, and funded through Queensland Health's Supporting Healthier Pregnancies Initiative.*