

Thinking about having a baby

Before
the baby
Bump



Fertility is the ability to have a baby. Many things can affect fertility for both women and men. These include age, timing of sex, health, and medical conditions.

Here are 5 ways to improve your chances of pregnancy and having a healthy baby.

1. Age

Fertility decreases as you get older. Women under 35 and men under 40 have a higher chance of conceiving naturally or with treatments like IVF (In-vitro fertilisation). Women under 30 have about a 20% chance of getting pregnant each month. By age 40, this drops to 5%.

If you've been trying for 12 months (or 6 months if over 35), see your doctor.

2. Timing of sex

The best time to conceive is during the 'fertile window'—the day of ovulation and the three days before it.

- A woman's menstrual cycle starts on day 1 of her period and ends the day before the next period. Ovulation (when an egg is released from the ovary) happens about 14 days before your next period. Eggs can only be fertilised for around 24 hours (one day) after ovulation.
- If your cycle is 28 days, your fertile window is days 11–14.
- For shorter cycles (e.g., 24 days), it's days 7–10.
- For longer cycles (e.g., 35 days), it's days 18–21.

If tracking cycles feels tricky, having sex every 2–3 days increases your chances. Sperm can live for about five days after sex.

A few days before ovulation, vaginal mucus tends to become clear and slippery, a bit like raw egg white, this can help women work out their most fertile time. Ovulation kits are available from supermarkets or pharmacies and can help identify fertile days. Ovulation tracker apps can help to monitor frequency over time.

3. Be as healthy as possible

Eating a healthy diet and moving each day can help normalise hormone levels and support a healthy weight, both of which promote fertility.

Living with overweight or obesity can affect hormone levels, the menstrual cycle, and quality of the women's egg and man's sperm. Start with achievable, positive health behaviours that you can keep; not just Before the Baby bump but during and after, to create lifelong healthy changes for you and your future family.

4. Make healthy behaviour choices that will support you and your future baby

For both men and women, starting healthy habits before the baby bump is just as important as being healthy during pregnancy.

You can do this by:

- Avoiding smoking, vaping, alcohol, and recreational drugs.
- Taking the right dose of folic acid and iodine supplements before and during pregnancy.
- Limiting caffeine and avoiding harmful chemicals.
- Checking all medications including natural therapies with your GP and managing any existing health concerns.
- Staying up to date with vaccinations and any health checks.

5. Manage medical conditions

Some medical conditions can affect fertility including:

- Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs),
- Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS),
- Endometriosis,
- Diabetes, or
- Past cancer treatments.

Speak to your doctor to manage these before trying for a baby.

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