



DuoFertility
Advanced Fertility Monitor

The **FREE** Guide to Taking Control of your Fertility

maximising *your* chances

*Impartial advice
from our team of
fertility experts*



A message from our fertility experts

Contrary to popular belief, getting pregnant is not the easiest thing in the world – in fact, as many as 1 in 6 couples in the UK experience difficulties conceiving. When trying for a baby, it is very important to have a good understanding of your body, your cycle and your partner's fertility. This guide has been written by DuoFertility's team of fertility experts to provide women with practical, impartial advice on how to maximise their chances of getting pregnant naturally.

By getting pregnant 'naturally', we mean getting pregnant without going through assisted reproductive treatment, such as IVF. While there are several very effective treatments out there for women who are finding it hard to get pregnant, we believe that it makes sense to maximise your chances of getting pregnant naturally before deciding whether to go down a more expensive, stressful and invasive route.

There are a number of very simple changes that you and your partner can make to your lifestyle to increase your chances of getting pregnant. We have listed the most effective things that you can do in this booklet.

We wish you all the best on your journey on getting pregnant.

Oriane Chausiaux

Dr. Oriane Chausiaux

DuoFertility Fertility Expert



Stop smoking

- It is widely known that smoking has a negative effect on your chances of getting pregnant, but many people do not realise just how drastically it can affect both male and female fertility.
- Smoking has been linked to infertility and early menopause in women, and sperm problems in men as well as erectile dysfunction – studies show that smokers are 30% less fertile than non-smokers. It also reduces the success of fertility treatments and smokers typically require a much higher dose of fertility drugs, which increases the risk of associated side effects. Even passive smoking can affect your ability to conceive, so it's a good opportunity to encourage your partner to quit too.
- The sperm count in men who smoke is, on average, 17% lower than in men who do not smoke, and sperm motility and morphology are also affected. For women, smoking not only increases the time it takes them to conceive, it also increases the risk of spontaneous miscarriage and can damage the health of their unborn baby. There is also a greater risk of delivering premature or low birth weight babies and developing pelvic inflammatory disease.
- Either cutting down or completely giving up smoking can produce noticeable results in a matter of weeks. In men who stop smoking, sperm count may increase by up to 800%, while women are likely to get pregnant much more quickly.

Watch your weight

Being over- or underweight can disrupt your periods and make it difficult for you to get pregnant. Studies show that having 17% to 21% of your total body weight as fat is ideal for getting pregnant. Having more or less body fat may affect your menstrual cycles and make it difficult for you to conceive, since the amount of fat contained in your body affects the level of hormones in your bloodstream.

Having a Body Mass Index (weight in kg/ height in metres squared) of over 29 may reduce your fertility levels. Doing regular exercise will help to lift your mood, sleep and relieve stress, but you don't have to fork out for a gym membership - doing yoga at home or going for regular walks is just as good.

Eating a healthy diet will give you lots of energy, and will help give your baby what it needs when you get pregnant. However, there is no need to lose a significant amount of weight to improve your chances of conceiving.

Even a small decrease in your weight can significantly increase your chances of conceiving.

Having a BMI of less than 19 can lead to irregular periods or cause your periods to stop altogether, so putting on a few pounds will help you to conceive. If you have problems gaining weight, your GP may wish to refer you to a dietician.

Relax!

High levels of stress can affect the level of hormones in your body, in particular, progesterone. Progesterone plays a major role during your menstrual cycle; it helps the uterus to mature in preparation for the reception of the fertilised egg. Being stressed may reduce the amount of active progesterone and therefore affect your menstrual cycle so that pregnancy does not occur.

It is therefore very important for you to get some time to relax. Just half an hour's relaxation a day, either by yourself or with your partner, can make a big difference and can reduce the time it takes you to conceive!

Stay active

Moderate exercise for at least 30 minutes a day will help to keep you fit and control your weight. Exercise also reduces stress and boosts the body's levels of endorphins (your own feel-good hormones).

Moderate exercise everyday is key to maintaining a healthy body. Exercise helps to burn off excess body fat and also helps in normalising your hormone levels, making it much easier for you to conceive. However, it is very important not to exercise excessively. Studies show that excessive amounts of exercise can lead to irregular periods, irregular ovulation and luteal phase deficiencies.

Enjoyable, low-impact activities are recommended, such as walking, swimming, cycling, yoga and meditation. Indeed, some yoga positions have been found to be very beneficial in improving the fertility levels of both women and men.

Eat a healthy diet

Both you and your partner should follow the dietary recommendations outlined in the Nutrition Section of The Foundation of Health website. Although it goes without saying that a healthy diet is crucial to a successful pregnancy and a healthy baby, many people are unaware of the fact that a healthy diet can help to correct hormone imbalances that may affect your ability to conceive.

What to eat

We recommend choosing foods that are rich in antioxidants.

- A high intake of Vitamins C and E can increase sperm count and sperm motility in men, and can reduce stress on the eggs and reproductive organs in women.
- Vitamin E and selenium can improve sperm motility.
- Eating foods with a low glycemic index such as fruits, vegetables, and beans; lean protein like yoghurt, chicken, and turkey; and essential fat including walnuts, and extra virgin oil helps maintain the hormonal balance in the body and improves the functioning of the reproductive organs.
- Folic acid aids in the growth of the foetus and also prevents neural tube defects.

Folic acid deficiency can also lead to miscarriages; it is important to maintain a consistent daily intake of folic acid 4mg/day. Folic acid can be found in leafy green vegetables, chicken liver, beef liver, lentils, asparagus, papaya, broccoli and eggs. It is important to boost your intake of folic acid before you even know that you are pregnant.

- The daily zinc requirement is approximately 10-15mg/day. Zinc deficiency plays an important role in infertility; having the appropriate amount of zinc in your diet increases the volume of semen in men. Zinc deficiency can also result in a greater risk of miscarriage and prolonged labour in women. Some food sources which contain zinc are beef, lamb, toasted wheat germ etc.
- Certain herbicides and pesticides sprayed on crops have been found to have drastic effects on fertility. Therefore, choosing organic foods whenever possible is recommended. We advise you to peel fruits and vegetables before eating when possible, otherwise, washing them thoroughly is advised.

What not to eat

- Some studies show that it is wise to avoid certain types of sea food which have high levels of mercury. However, other types of seafood, such as oily fish, have significant health benefits.
- Many infertility issues crop up due to hormonal imbalances. You can try to avoid this by reducing your intake of processed flours and sugars such as white bread, pasta, pop, candy, and sugary juices from your diet.

Drink wisely

Government guidelines advise both men and women trying to conceive to avoid alcohol completely. Men definitely shouldn't drink more than three or four units a day, and should avoid binge drinking to prevent damage to sperm.

Alcohol will affect both you and your partner. In fact, drinking any alcohol at all can reduce your fertility by half - and the more you drink, the less likely you are to conceive. One study showed that women who drink less than 5 units of alcohol a week (equal to five glasses of wine) are twice as likely to get pregnant within six months compared with those who drank more. Women who continue drinking alcohol while pregnant increase the risk of having a baby with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome – this is a permanent and irreversible condition where the baby fails to develop normally.

Research has also shown that drinking alcohol causes a decrease in sperm count, an increase in abnormal sperm and a lower proportion of motile sperm. Alcohol also inhibits the body's absorption of nutrients such as zinc, which is one of the most important minerals for male fertility. As difficult as it may seem, you need to completely eliminate alcohol from your diets for at least three months before you start seeing any effect.

Another chemical to avoid in order to increase your chances of conceiving is caffeine, which can be found in tea, coffee, chocolate and soft drinks. Food which includes caffeine includes colas, chocolate, black teas and coffee, among other things. Caffeine reduces the fertility levels of both men and women and even a single cup of coffee may reduce the chances of conception to half.

Time intercourse

Getting pregnant is mainly a matter of timing intercourse for the most fertile time of your cycle: it relies on the egg and sperm meeting at exactly the right time. Most couples who are trying for a baby take more time than expected to get pregnant, whether they are fertile or infertile. This is primarily because they do not have intercourse at the best time of their cycle.

Each menstrual cycle, a woman's body prepares itself to support a baby. The levels of hormones in the bloodstream are correctly balanced, an egg (ovule) is released and the womb becomes an ideal place for the egg to be implanted. The ovule can only be fertilised between one and two days after ovulation, and the lifetime of sperm is usually at most 5 days. Therefore, the best time to have intercourse is just before and just after ovulation. It is therefore very important to know exactly when you ovulate so you can maximise your chances of getting pregnant. Although the length of the fertile window varies from one couple to another, timing intercourse is absolutely crucial to increase your chances of getting pregnant.

Some couples believe that it is best to have intercourse less frequently during their fertile window in order to replenish their sperm supply. However, this is not true for most couples and it is best to make love every day during your most fertile days. Your chances of conception increase with the frequency of intercourse during your fertile days.

Monitor your ovulation

If you are trying to get pregnant, monitoring your ovulation is absolutely critical. There are only very few days in your cycle on which you can get pregnant – these include the day of ovulation, and the days preceding and following ovulation. Knowing exactly when you are ovulating will therefore let you identify when you are most likely to get pregnant, and allow you to time intercourse for the best time of the month. Getting pregnant really is all about timing!

Below is a list of simple tips on how to monitor your ovulation:

Cervical mucus quality

As you approach ovulation, the quantity and texture of your cervical mucus will change. It will become more abundant, and will be slippery, thin, and stretchy like raw egg white. These changes help to make the environment of your vagina more hospitable to sperm as they travel towards the egg. Monitoring changes in your cervical mucus is therefore a reliable way of identifying when you are ovulating. However, some women find it difficult to check their cervical mucus, and it may be confused with other fluids, such as residual semen.

Ovulation pain

Ovulation pain is usually a sharp twinge in the lower abdomen that then becomes a dull ache. It is believed to be due to the rupture of the ovarian follicle when the egg is released. Ovulation pains do sometimes coincide with ovulation, and may be an effective way of monitoring ovulation. However, it is only experienced by 20% of women, and in some cases, it is only experienced after

ovulation has occurred. We therefore do not recommend that it is used as a primary method of monitoring ovulation, although it can be used in conjunction with other ovulation signs.

Changes in your saliva

As your body approaches ovulation, hormones cause a change in the electrolyte composition of your saliva; during the most fertile time of your cycle, a ferning pattern will be seen in your saliva under a microscope, in contrast to non-fertile days, when no pattern will be visible. Therefore, monitoring changes in your saliva may help you to identify ovulation. However, this is not a very reliable method – factors such as stress may also lead to changes in your saliva, and the results are often unclear and very difficult to interpret. We do not recommend that you use this method as your primary method of monitoring ovulation. Some monitors claim that monitoring ferning patterns through a microscope can help to identify your fertile days, however the scientific literature does not support this. Other monitors allow the direct measurement of electrolytes, but these can be dramatically affected by stress, a cold, change in diet...

Temperature charting

Your body basal temperature (BBT) is the lowest temperature that your body reaches during each day; it is usually reached when you are in deep sleep. When you ovulate, there is a small increase in BBT after ovulation. Identifying this temperature rise will help you to pinpoint when you are ovulating. Temperature charting is a trusted method of monitoring ovulation; it is the only method used at home that can confirm that ovulation has actually happened. However, taking manual temperature measurements is subject to human error and usually requires you to wake up

early every morning. In addition, if it is not used in conjunction with other parameters, manual BBT measurements are usually not accurate enough to provide you with a firm identification of ovulation with enough time for you to take action. The use of continuous temperature monitoring in addition to analysing other parameters seems to be able to solve this problem.

LH test strips

Just before ovulation, there is a significant increase in the amount of luteinising hormone (LH) in your body. Using an LH test strip can identify this surge in LH by detecting the amount of LH in your urine; if the test is positive, this indicates that you are just about to ovulate. LH test strips are a non-invasive way of monitoring your ovulation. However, they require you to take inconvenient urine samples every day, and they do not provide accurate results for women with hormone levels which are higher or lower than average, such as women with PCOS. In addition, LH tests do not provide confirmation that ovulation has occurred and therefore are not useful in providing information on your overall level of fertility.



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Serious about getting pregnant.

This report has been developed by the fertility experts at DuoFertility, the most convenient and precise fertility monitor on the market. It is important to keep in mind that this is only a rough guide.

If you would like further information about how to get pregnant naturally and a range of other areas such as fertility treatments and fertility conditions, please visit www.DuoFertility.com.

If you would like to arrange a FREE telephone consultation with one of our fertility experts, please call 01223 437001 or email fertility.expert@duofertility.com.

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