

What is Preconception Healthcare?

Infertility has become more and more prevalent over the years. Studies have indicated that the possible cause is our modern, fast paced lifestyle with its standard westernised diet, high stress and increased exposure to environmental pollutants. Other papers have shown that parents who undertake preconception care to improve their lifestyles and diets, reduce their exposure to environmental toxins and improve their general health and well-being, they improve their reproductive outcomes considerably.

Ultimately preconception care ensures optimal reproductive health for both parents. Optimal reproductive health generally ensures an easier conception, pregnancy and labour, easier breast feeding and healthy, happy baby

Who can benefit from preconception care?

- Healthy fertile couples or individuals who want a happy, healthy baby.
- Anyone who has fertility issues with or without a known cause. ie. low sperm count or motility and hormonal disorders such as anovulation, endometriosis, polycystic ovarian syndrome etc
- People who have experienced miscarriages, whether single or multiple.
- Couples or individuals who have had previous experience with low birth weight, stillbirth, prematurity, sudden infant death syndrome etc.
- Anyone seeking support before, during or after fertility (ie. IVF) treatments.
- Older potential parents -especially to aid conception and prevention of Down's Syndrome and other ill effects for the baby.
- Potential parents where either partner has a chronic health issue. ie. diabetes, multiple sclerosis, inflammatory bowel disease, asthma, eczema etc

Sperm take 116 days to form and reach maturation and it takes approximately 11 days for ovum to reach maturity and ovulation. During this time both are highly susceptible to being damaged. Therefore, it is recommended that preconception care begin 3-4 months prior to the intended conception date to allow for healthy sperm and ovum and therefore a healthy foetus. Extra time may be necessary to treat any pre-existing and underlying health conditions that could be affecting reproductive health.

Both prospective parents need to be involved. Some of the lifestyle changes may take considerable motivation and dedication therefore supporting one another is paramount.