

# Women’s Preconception Health & Wellness Checklist

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**Table 1. Preconception Checklist / Things you need to do on your own.**

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Avoid Exposure to the Zika Virus</b>	<p>Contracting the Zika virus can cause a birth defect called microcephaly and other problems with fetal brain development. The best way to prevent Zika is to prevent mosquito bites and avoid having sex with an infected person (1).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Take a Quality Prenatal Vitamin with at Least 400 Micrograms of Folic Acid Daily</b>	<p>Supplementation helps fill in the gaps of required nutrients, vitamins and minerals for mother and baby. More specifically, folic acid {or folate} is necessary early on during rapid cell division, and is essential in preventing neural tube defects (2).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Minimize Exposure to Toxic Chemicals</b>	<p>Exposure to toxic substances and other harmful materials such as teratogenic agents, heavy metals, organic solvents, endocrine disruptors, allergens and pesticides can hurt the reproductive systems of both men and women and potentially harm the fetus (3)(4)(5).</p> <p>It’s important to be mindful of such interactions, read labels, and take safety precautions if and when handling these substances in your home, the community or workplace (6).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Get Active! Reach and Maintain a Healthy Weight</b>	<p>Try to get a total of 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity throughout the week. (7) An ideal Body Mass Index (BMI) is 19.8 to 26.0 (8). 10 minutes at a time is fine!</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Stay Adequately Hydrated</b>	<p>As a general rule, aim for between 8-10 glasses of clean, filtered water daily. It’s important for organ function and for delivering nutrients to your body. Plus, it helps flush toxins out too (9).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Limit or Avoid Caffeine</b>	<p>Caffeine is a stimulant and a diuretic which may increase your blood pressure and heart rate. In addition, some studies have shown a link between caffeine consumption (more than two cups a day) and miscarriage risk (10).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Avoid Risky Behaviors</b>	<p>No smoking, limit or avoid alcohol, and avoid illicit drug use. Keep your body clean, safe and free of avoidable toxins to help avoid problems during pregnancy such as premature birth, birth defects, and infant death (11).</p>

<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Properly Manage Stress</b></p>	<p>Stress every now and again is inevitable. Try relaxation techniques such as adequate sleep (12), yoga, meditation or acupuncture to help relax. If it becomes chronic, it's not just you that is suffering, but your fertility can suffer as well. Getting support from a health coach or therapist can be very helpful. The body is always going to prioritize survival {which in the modern world looks like chronic stress buffering} over reproduction (13) (14).</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Eat Healthy! Focus on Nutrient Dense Foods</b></p>	<p>Eating a well balanced, nutrient dense diet is an investment in your body and your fertility, to ensure both healthy fetal development and to minimize or prevent pregnancy complications. Proper nutrition is the foundation of good health and contains the building blocks of life. For more information and nutrition guidelines, visit ChooseMyPlate.gov (15) (16).</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Become Familiar with your Menstrual Cycle</b></p>	<p>Be proactive in identifying potential early warning signs of infertility such as irregular or absent periods, cysts, pelvic pain, or not conceiving after 1 year for women under 35, or 6 months for women over 35. NOTE: If cycles are irregular, request to have your reproductive hormones measured without delay (17).</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Consider Sperm Health</b></p>	<p>It's important your partner also take positive steps to support conception by following healthy lifestyle habits for optimal sperm health. (18)</p>

**Table 2. Preconception Checklist / Things you need to do with your doctor's help.**

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Schedule a Visit with your Doctor</b>	<p>Preconception care aims to promote the health of women in their reproductive years before conception, thereby improving pregnancy-related outcomes for both mother and baby. This visit gives you a good opportunity to review your overall health status and discuss any questions or concerns you may have with your doctor or healthcare professional (19).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Schedule a Visit with Your Dentist</b>	<p>Regular dental checkups are important. Some studies have shown a link between gum disease and delivering a premature or low birth weight baby (20).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Consider Genetic Testing</b>	<p>Know your family's health history. If you or your partner have a family member with a history of birth defects or an inherited medical condition, consider genetic screening to examine your own child's risk (21).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Be Aware of Pre-Existing Medical Conditions</b>	<p>Discuss with your doctor your current medications if any, {prescription or over the counter} and how to modify your treatment plan if need be (22).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Obtain a Breast &amp; Pelvic Exam</b>	<p>Pelvic and breast exams are necessary in the prevention and early detection of potential fertility roadblocks, women's cancers and sexual transmitted diseases (23).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Determine Rh Factor</b>	<p>Rh Factor is a protein found on the surface of red blood cells. Complications can arise during pregnancy if your Rh Factor is negative and your baby's is positive, therefore it's best to know ahead of time to help prevent any issues (24).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Measure Blood Glucose</b>	<p>Generally speaking, a test result of 100 milligrams per deciliter or higher indicates prediabetes or diabetes, which must be identified, treated and monitored to help prevent complications (25)(26).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Determine if You Need to Have Your Thyroid Levels Checked</b>	<p>Untreated thyroid conditions can hinder a woman's ability to conceive, and can even lead to miscarriage if not treated adequately. A healthy functioning thyroid is imperative for neurologic development of the fetus (25)(26).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Obtain Screening for Certain Infections</b>	<p>Testing for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases before conception is important (3)(12).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Determine the Need for Certain Immunizations</b>	<p>Having the right vaccinations at the right time can help keep you healthy and help keep your baby from getting very sick or having lifelong health problems. Determine if you are immune to Rubella (German Measles) and Varicella (Chicken Pox)</p>

References:

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- (5)<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5506a1.htm>
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