

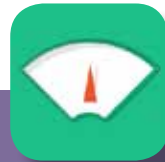
Thinking about having a baby?

Most people want to become parents one day



Fertility is the ability to have a baby.

Many things can affect women's and men's fertility, including their age, when they have sex, how healthy they are, and whether they have any medical conditions.



5 ways to improve your chance of getting pregnant and having a healthy baby

1. Age

Age is the most important factor when it comes to fertility, as fertility declines with age.

Women younger than 35 and men younger than 40 have a better chance of having a child than people who are older. This is true for natural pregnancies and for pregnancies conceived through assisted reproductive treatments such as IVF (in-vitro fertilisation).

- Women younger than 30 have about a 20 per cent chance of getting pregnant naturally each month. By age 40, the chance of pregnancy is about five per cent each month.
- It takes longer to conceive for women whose male partners are older than 40.
- The combination of both partners' ages determines the likelihood of pregnancy.

IVF can help people with infertility have a family. However, technology cannot make up for the natural decline in fertility that happens as women and men get older.

If you have been trying for 12 months or more (six months if you're a woman older than 35), it's time to talk to your doctor about your options.

If you have a choice, trying for a baby sooner rather than later improves your chance of pregnancy.

2. Timing of sex

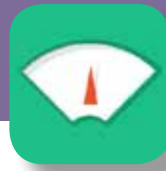
Having sex on the days when a woman is fertile, increases the chance of pregnancy. It's all about timing! After having sex, sperm live for about five days. Eggs can only be fertilised for about one day after ovulation (when an egg is released from the ovary).

The best time to have sex to become pregnant is during the 'fertile window', which is the day of ovulation and the five days before that. A woman's **most fertile** time is during the three days leading up to and including ovulation.

How to work out the most fertile days

A woman's menstrual cycle starts on day 1 of her period and finishes the day before the next period. Ovulation happens about 14 days before the period starts.

So, the 'fertile window' days depend on the length of the menstrual cycle.



If on average you have a period every 28 days you ovulate around day 14 and your best chance of conceiving is between days 11 and 14. But if you have a shorter time between periods, say 24 days, ovulation happens around day 10 and your 'fertile window' is between days 7 and 10. If you have 35 days between periods, your fertile window is between days 18 and 21.

If it's all too hard to work out, having sex every 2-3 days improves your chance of getting pregnant.

A few days before ovulation, vaginal mucus tends to become clear and slippery, a bit like raw egg white, which helps some women work out their most fertile time. You can also use an ovulation predictor kit from the supermarket or pharmacy.

To work out your average cycle length and 'fertile window' visit www.yourfertility.org.au

3. Being as healthy as possible

For men and women, being a healthy weight increases the chance of pregnancy.

Being in good shape will not only boost your fertility and your general health, it will also give your baby the best start in life.

Carrying extra weight can cause problems with hormone levels, which can affect the menstrual cycle, and the quality of a woman's eggs and a man's sperm.

The good news is that making some changes like eating healthy food and being physically active, can put you on a pathway to a healthier weight. It can be hard, but losing even a few kilos can make a big difference.

It's not about having some kind of 'perfect' body – just a healthy body, because healthier parents have healthier babies.

4. Making smart lifestyle choices

For both men and women, the lead up to conception is just as important as being healthy during pregnancy. You can do this by:

- taking the right dose of folic acid and iodine (for women), before and during pregnancy
- not smoking
- cutting out alcohol
- avoiding recreational drugs
- discussing the safety of any medication you are taking (including natural therapies) with your doctor
- limiting your caffeine intake
- avoiding some chemicals commonly found in the home or workplace
- making sure your vaccinations, especially German Measles (Rubella), are up to date.

5. Managing medical conditions

Some medical conditions can affect fertility including:

- sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)
- endometriosis
- diabetes
- cancer treatment

If either partner has a medical condition, talk to your doctor to make sure it's under control before trying for a baby.

Visit www.yourfertility.org.au to find out more about getting your body 'baby-ready'. Find information and a range of videos, interactive tools and personal stories to help improve your chance of becoming pregnant and having a healthy baby.



www.yourfertility.org.au

Your Fertility is a national public education campaign funded by the Australian Government Department of Health.