

There are a number of factors that can affect fertility. Genetics and our environment play a combined role in how we are able to conceive. The key idea is to be in our best possible health to create the best possible chance for our offspring. Although we all know to get enough rest, watch our stress and drink our eight glasses of water, there may be other areas we can work on.



Eat Your Fruits and Vegetables

These are full of free-radical busting antioxidants and phytochemicals. Free radicals are harmful molecules that can damage the sperm, ova and reproductive organs. Free radicals can come from places like sunlight, car exhaust, burning plastics or the char from barbequing. Health Canada now recommends eating one dark green and one orange vegetable each day. Other bright colored foods can include blueberries, red and green peppers or kiwis.



Get enough Fibre

The best way to do this is cutting out or reducing refined carbohydrates. The refining process strips away a number of key nutrients from grains that could boost fertility. Think “slow carbs” – carbohydrates that take more time for our bodies to digest. Whole grain breads, cereals, and grains will help to meet this goal. Once you continue these carbohydrates during pregnancy, they can help to prevent gestational diabetes since they slow the release of sugar into the blood stream and therefore less tasking on the body to release insulin.



Watch your Fats

Try your best to cut out any trans/hydrogenated fat from the diet. These fats are made by taking a healthy, unsaturated fat like canola oil and adding hydrogen atoms to it. This is done at a high temperature and high pressure to change the structure. Hydrogenated fats are difficult for our bodies to process. Researchers are still learning about the effects of trans fats such as the ability to turn off or on certain genes, increasing or slowing inflammation and influencing cell function. When reading food labels, watch for key words like ‘hydrogenated’ or ‘shortening’. Saturated fats are also unhealthy as they also put us at risk for heart disease and diabetes. Unsaturated fats, or good fats, improve fertility by increasing insulin sensitivity and cooling inflammation, the opposite of what trans fats do.



Body Weight

At best, try to meet and maintain your ideal body weight when you get pregnant. A non-pregnant adult should have a BMI (body mass index) between 20-25. BMI can be calculated by dividing weight in kilograms by the square of height in meters. Women who do not have enough stored energy to sustain pregnancy often have trouble ovulating or stop menstruating. Women who have too much stored energy often have trouble conceiving for other reason, many of which affect ovulation and are hormonal.



Exercise and Activity

Health Canada continues to recommend getting in 60 minutes of activity a day. This can be achieved by working on small 10-minute blocks – like parking farther away from your destination to force you to walk a little farther. If your day is erratic, use a pedometer to help you reach your fitness goals. Ten thousand steps is the goal – if you already reach this on

a regular day, try to surpass your usual number by five thousand.



Omit Alcohol

Potential moms and dad need to limit or omit alcohol from their intake. Since many women do not know when they conceive, it is best to curb alcohol.



Limit Caffeinated Beverages

The current recommendation is two 8-ounce cups a day. Caffeine constricts blood vessels, slowing blood flow the uterus and potentially making it more difficult for an egg to grab hold. Try replacing some of your regular blend with decaf until you have weaned yourself off, or try steamed milk with a shot of flavoured syrup.



Take Your Multivitamin

This is the insurance policy on your diet. If you miss a couple of key nutrients, most multivitamins, and in particular preconception and prenatal vitamins will ensure that these nutrients are not missed. Both moms and dads need to be taking their vitamins to ensure that the body is optimally balanced to create their new individual. If prenatal vitamins make you feel unwell, try taking them before bed or switch from a tablet to a capsule, these are easier to digest. Preconception vitamins for men contain zinc and selenium that aid in healthy sperm development. It is best for men to start taking preconception vitamins for at least three months since it takes this long to develop healthy sperm.