



## Preconception Health

Preconception health refers to the health of an individual(s) prior to pregnancy. While preconception health care may look different for every person, the goal is to improve pregnancy outcomes through prevention of disease and management of risk factors that may affect pregnancy and the health of future offspring. Preconception care is relevant for all men and women of reproductive age, and having an understanding of your preconception health is an important step in creating a healthy family.

### **Establishing Care with a Primary Care Provider and Obstetrician/Gynecologist**

Prior to attempting pregnancy, it is important to have a primary care provider (PCP) and/or an Obstetrician/Gynecologist (OBGYN) that can advise you on medical conditions not related to your fertility treatment, such as bladder infections, colds/flu, depression, and back pain.

### **Genetic Screening**

Genes typically come in pairs, with one copy from each reproductive partner. Genetic screening can identify individuals who carry mutations on one or more of their genes. These “carriers” are typically healthy, have no symptoms of a genetic disease, and often do not have any associated family history. When reproductive partners carry a mutation within the same recessive gene, there is a 1 in 4 or 25% chance that each offspring will develop the correlating genetic disorder. However, as long as one partner’s screening is negative, the risk of having an affected child is greatly reduced. SRM recommends and encourages genetic screening for one or both reproductive partners prior to attempting pregnancy.

### **Cancer Screening**

Individuals at average risk of breast and cervical cancer should be offered screening based on the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) guidelines. Screening recommendations are based on age and health history, and we encourage you to discuss these recommendations with your PCP or OBGYN prior to initiating treatment.

### **Zika Virus**

Information about the Zika virus, and the associated pregnancy risks, are updated continuously. We follow the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) recommendations for Zika precautions.

The recommendation is to avoid traveling to areas with active Zika virus transmission when trying to conceive and during pregnancy. Individuals who have traveled, or plan to travel, to an area with a Zika virus travel notice should wait the recommended timeframe before attempting pregnancy.

This timeframe is different for men and women because the Zika virus can stay in semen longer than other bodily fluids. Please visit the CDC website to review areas of active Zika virus transmission, and to review the identified methods for preventing exposure if you must travel to an area of risk.

<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy/women-and-their-partners.html>

### **Vaccinations**

Infections such as Chickenpox (Varicella) and German Measles (Rubella) can have serious consequences if acquired during pregnancy. Screening is recommended to confirm your immunity status, even if you have previously had the disease, or previously had a Rubella or Varicella vaccination. Adequate immunity may have worn off, or not been achieved, in which case, the diseases can be prevented with targeted immunizations administered prior to pregnancy.

Influenza (seasonal flu) is a potentially serious disease, and is more likely to cause severe illness in pregnant women. Vaccinations can be given anytime, including in pregnancy. It is recommended that women who are pregnant, or attempting pregnancy, get vaccinated annually against the flu.

### **Thyroid Function**

Abnormal thyroid function can lead to menstrual irregularity and can be associated with an increased risk of miscarriage. Thyroid Stimulating Hormone (TSH) is a blood test used to determine thyroid function, and screening is advised for all women attempting to conceive.

### **Control of Chronic Conditions**

Chronic conditions, such as high blood pressure (hypertension), diabetes, asthma, and obesity may put women at higher risk for pregnancy complications, and should be as controlled as possible prior to conception. If you have an underlying medical condition, or are taking certain medications, it is important to be closely monitored by the appropriate medical team. In that light, it may be recommended that you see a Perinatologist prior to attempting pregnancy.

### **Lifestyle & Adjunct Therapies**

It is important to make thoughtful lifestyle choices to maximize your opportunity for a healthy pregnancy. We recommend talking with your provider, or another health care professional, if you smoke, use drugs, are exposed to toxic substances, or live in a stressful or abusive environment. We have resources available to help guide you through all aspects of your care.

Mental health is a significant factor in your fertility journey, and we understand that this process can be very stressful and emotionally difficult. SRM offers counseling services designed to help you cope with stress, facilitate and support problem-solving and decision-making, and strengthen your overall emotional health. We encourage you to discuss any concerns you may have with your provider.

Acupuncture, Yoga, and Meditation are good complements to traditional fertility treatment. All three therapies have been shown to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, all of which can accompany and exacerbate fertility challenges. Please ask your coordinator for additional information and resources, if desired.

### **Diet and Exercise**

Healthy diet and exercise choices are essential when attempting pregnancy. Women who are underweight or overweight have an increased risk of pregnancy complications. We encourage a well-balanced diet as well as regular physical activity (thirty to forty-five minutes of low to moderate intensity exercise) three to four times per week.

Food plays a vital role in overall health. It is important to have a diet with fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. If you drink alcohol, an occasional alcoholic beverage is okay until ovulation. Limit beverages that contain caffeine or green tea to around 200mcg per day. We are happy to provide a referral to a local nutritionist who specializes in optimizing fertility through diet.



## Medications & Supplements

Some medications, herbs, and supplements may pose a risk in pregnancy. It is very important to discuss anything you are taking with your provider. It is possible that over-the-counter or prescription drugs may need to be changed or modified before pregnancy. While we respect non-traditional medicine, herbal supplements are discouraged because they are not FDA approved, and we do not have enough data on their safety during fertility treatment and/or pregnancy.

We strongly recommend taking a daily prenatal vitamin prior to conception, and throughout pregnancy. In general, we recommend choosing a prenatal vitamin with a daily dosage of:

800 mcg folic acid

400 IU vitamin D

15 mg zinc

200 mg calcium

27 mg iron

200 mg DHA (can be a separate capsule)

At least 150 mcg iodine (220 to 250 mcg is recommended in pregnancy)

It is important to take the optimal dose of folic acid (at least 800mcg per day) to assist in the prevention of neural tube defects. Iron is another important supplement, which is often missing in standard multi vitamins. Many women are unknowingly anemic when they conceive. Vitamin D is also essential for overall health. In general, unless you have been advised otherwise, the recommendation is to take 1000 IU Vitamin D in the summer and 2000 IU daily the rest of the year. Most prenatal vitamins do not have this dose included, and you can purchase separate Vitamin D supplements over-the-counter at the grocery store or drug store.

While we do not recommend a particular prenatal brand, we encourage you to look for trusted supplements with one of the following labels:

