



Preconception Health Care Checklist

All women planning to, or likely to become pregnant need to consider specific health information which will be beneficial to them and their unborn child. Use this checklist to guide your discussion

Consultation 1

Medical Issues

- Reproductive Life Plan:** Assist your patient in developing a plan that includes whether they want to have children and if so, the number, spacing and timing of children
- Reproductive History:** Problems with previous pregnancies such as infant death, foetal loss, birth defects, low birth weight, preterm birth, and gestational diabetes? Any ongoing risks that could lead to a recurrence in a future pregnancy?
- Medical History:** Medical conditions that may affect future pregnancies? Are chronic conditions such as diabetes, thyroid, hypertension, epilepsy, and thrombophilias well managed, and do any medications need to be changed to accommodate pregnancy?
- Medication Use:** Review all current medications, including over-the-counter medications, vitamins and supplements. Avoid category C & D medications
- Genetic/Family History:** Assess risk of chromosomal/genetic disorders, based on family history/ethnic background (e.g. neural tube defects (NTD), cystic fibrosis, fragile X, Tay-Sachs disease, thalassemia, sickle cell anaemia)
- General Physical Assessment:** Pap smear & breast examinations should be done before pregnancy. Assess body mass index, blood pressure and ask about periodontal disease
- Substance Use:** Ask about tobacco, alcohol and illegal drug use

Screening

- Blood type and antibody screen**
- STIs (as indicated):** Screen for STIs such as syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia, and HIV
- Psychosocial Health:** Screen for depression, anxiety and domestic violence
- Cystic fibrosis & other carrier screening:** as indicated from genetic/family history. (cystic fibrosis carrier testing pack available from Genetic Health Services Victoria. Ph: (03) 8341 6201 or <http://www.genetichealthvic.net.au/>)
- Rubella & Varicella Serology (as indicated)**

Consultation 2

Vaccinations (as indicated)

If previous vaccination history or infection is uncertain, testing should be undertaken to determine immunity. Women receiving live viral vaccines such as measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) and varicella should be advised against falling pregnant within 28 days of vaccination

- Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR)**
- Influenza**
- Diphtheria/Tetanus/Pertussis (Boostrix)**
- Varicella**
- Pneumococcal***
- Hepatitis B***

**indicated for women at high risk*

Sources: 1. Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. Guidelines for preventive activities in general practice (the red book). 6th ed. Melbourne: RACGP, 2005
2. American Academy of Pediatrics and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. In: Gilstrap L, Oh W, editors. Guidelines for perinatal care. 5th Ed. Washington, DC, 2002.
3. Lu, MC. Recommendations for Preconception Care. 2007. American Family Physician. 76(3): 397-400
4. The Australian Immunisation Handbook. 9th Ed. National Health and Medical Research Council. Australian Government Publishing Services, 2008.

For GP and patient preconception resources: www.med.monash.edu.au/general-practice/preconception

Lifestyle Issues

- Family Planning:** Based on the patients' reproductive life plan, discuss fertility awareness, chance of conception, and risk of delayed childbearing, infertility and foetal abnormality. For patients not planning to become pregnant, discuss effective contraception and emergency contraceptive options
- Folic Acid Supplementation:** Women should take a 0.4-0.5mg supplement of folic acid per day for at least one month prior to pregnancy and for the first three months after conception. In women at high risk (i.e. women with a reproductive or family history of NTD, Type I diabetes, or on medication for epilepsy/seizures) the dose should be increased to 5mg per day
- Healthy weight, nutrition & exercise:** Caution against being over or underweight. Recommend regular moderate intensity exercise and assess risk of nutritional deficiencies (e.g. vegan, lactose intolerance, calcium or iron deficiency)
- Psychosocial Health:** Provide support and identify coping strategies to improve emotional health and wellbeing
- Smoking, alcohol and illegal drug cessation (as indicated):** Smoking, alcohol and illegal drug use during pregnancy can have serious consequences for an unborn child and should be stopped prior to conception
- Healthy environments:** Repeated exposure to hazardous toxins in the household and workplace environment can affect fertility and the risk of miscarriage and birth defects. Discuss avoidance of TORCH infections:
 - **Toxoplasmosis** – avoidance of cat litter, garden soil, and raw/undercooked meat
 - **Cytomegalovirus, parvovirus B19 (fifth disease)** – Wash hands frequently and observe strict infection control for child and health care workers
 - **Listeriosis** – avoidance of pate, soft cheeses, pre-packaged salads, deli meats, and chilled/smoked seafood