

Benefits of knowing pregnancy status early

Early knowledge of pregnancy enables women to make informed choices about their health and obtain timely antenatal advice from healthcare professionals to make positive changes.¹ The advice provided by healthcare professionals should be followed prior to conception; however, an estimated 47% of pregnancies were reported to be unintended.² The earlier a woman finds out she is pregnant, the earlier she can make positive lifestyle changes.

Smoking

It is recommended that women stop smoking during pregnancy. There is a dose-dependent association between smoking and outcomes, such as abruption, stillbirth and recurrent pregnancy loss. Evidence suggests that those who do stop smoking are likely to permanently quit.³



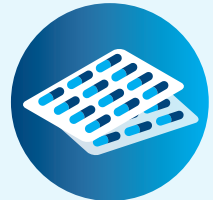
Alcohol

There is no safe alcohol limit in pregnancy. Women are advised to stop consumption of alcohol, ideally before a planned pregnancy.³



Folic acid

For pregnant women, dietary supplementation with folic acid before conception and throughout the first 12 weeks of pregnancy reduces the risk of the baby developing neural tube defects.^{3,4} If a woman has not taken folic acid prior to conception, a 6-day early pregnancy test permits folic acid supplements to be taken at a time prior to the closure of the neural tube, potentially helping to reduce the risk of neural tube defects.^{5,6}



Exercise

Regular aerobic exercise during pregnancy appears to improve physical fitness, but the evidence is insufficient to suggest risks or benefits for the mother or baby. Owing to the effects of prenatal obesity, the advice is to continue with moderate exercise during pregnancy.^{3,7}



Caffeine

Pregnant women should be advised to limit their caffeine intake to 150 mg/day, which is equivalent to two cups of normal coffee or three cups of black tea.³ There is a dose-related effect on pregnancy, with an increased risk of miscarriage with higher levels of caffeine.³



Diet

Pregnant women should be offered information on how to:

- Adopt a balanced diet, involving a variety of foods, such as fruits and vegetables⁴
- Reduce the risk of listeriosis by only drinking pasteurised / ultra-high temperature processed milk and avoiding soft cheeses, pâté and uncooked/undercooked ready-prepared meals⁴
- Avoid an intake of over 700µg of vitamin A supplements as it may be teratogenic. High levels of vitamin A are found in liver products, so they should be avoided⁴
- Reduce the risk of salmonella infection by avoiding raw or partially cooked eggs or meat⁴



Prescription and over-the-counter medicines

Only a few prescription and over-the-counter medicines have been established as safe to use in pregnant women and should be used as little as possible during pregnancy. Use of prescription medicines should be limited to circumstances in which the benefit outweighs the risk.⁴ Women should seek advice from their healthcare professional.



Vaccinations

Vaccinations should be offered against:

- **Pertussis** (whooping cough) if a pregnant woman has not been immunised during the course of the current pregnancy⁴
- **Influenza** if a pregnant woman has not already been vaccinated in the current influenza season⁴
- **COVID-19** – a booster vaccination may be required⁴



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