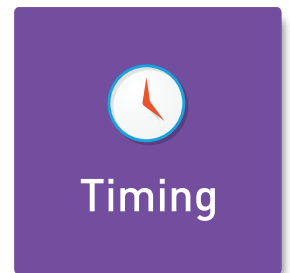
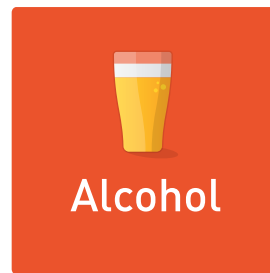
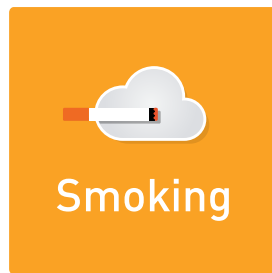
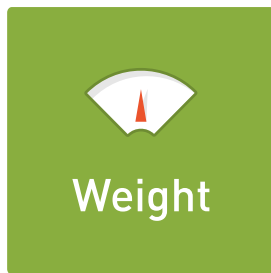
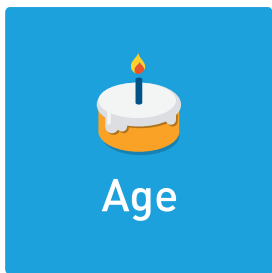


# Thinking about having a baby?

Talk to your doctor!

Here is what men and women can do to increase their chance of getting pregnant and having a healthy baby.

1. Learn about the top five fertility factors.
2. Complete the 'Preconception health checklist' at [www.yourfertility.org.au](http://www.yourfertility.org.au) to take to your doctor.
3. Visit your doctor to discuss how to optimise your chance of conceiving and having a healthy baby.
4. Visit [www.yourfertility.org.au](http://www.yourfertility.org.au) for more information.



## Top Five Fertility Factors

### Age

Fertility declines with age, so if you are thinking about having a baby, consider trying sooner rather than later.

On average, women's fertility starts to decline in their early thirties and declines more rapidly after **age 35**. The monthly chance of conceiving is about 20% for a woman in her twenties. By age 40 it is only 5%.

Men's fertility starts to decline at about **age 45**. Men over the age of 40 are 30% less likely than younger men to achieve conception within a year.

Consider seeing a fertility specialist if:

- the female partner is **younger than 35** and you have tried to get pregnant **for a year or more**
- the female partner is **older than 35** and you have tried to get pregnant **for six months or more**.

### Weight

Size matters! Studies show that fertility and the health of a baby at birth and into adulthood are affected by the health of the parents even before conception.

- Being overweight can result in hormone imbalances that affect ovulation and sperm quality.
- Being very overweight lowers fertility and increases the risk of pregnancy complications.
- A healthy diet together with regular exercise can help reduce and maintain weight in the healthy range.
- Your doctor can point you in the right direction if you want to lose weight.

## Smoking

Smoking has damaging effects on the whole body, including eggs and sperm. It also increases the risks of pregnancy complications and health problems for the baby. Quitting before conception is the only way to reduce these risks.

## Alcohol

For women, not drinking alcohol is the safest option if you are pregnant or trying to have a baby.

For men, avoid drinking excessive amounts of alcohol to improve your sperm quality.

## Timing of sex

When you want to have a baby you can improve the odds of this happening if you have sex during the 'fertile window' of the menstrual cycle.

Ovulation is when an egg is released from the ovary. This happens two weeks before a period starts. Technically, pregnancy is possible during the six days leading up to and including ovulation. But, the likelihood of pregnancy is dramatically increased if you have intercourse during the three days leading up to and including the day of ovulation.

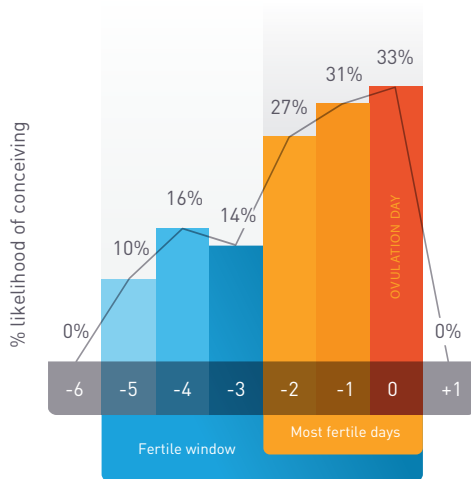
The length of a woman's menstrual cycle determines when ovulation occurs:

- in 28 day cycles the most fertile days are days 12 to 14
- in 24 day cycles the most fertile days are days 8 to 10
- in 35 day cycles the most fertile days are between days 19 and 21.

For women with irregular cycles, your doctor can order blood tests to check if you are ovulating.

If all this seems too complicated, an alternative is to have sex every two to three days - that way you are sure to cover all bases without getting too technical about when the chance of conceiving is greatest.

Visit [www.yourfertility.org.au](http://www.yourfertility.org.au) for more information about the 'fertile window' and an ovulation calculator.



Day of intercourse relative to ovulation

## General health

Here are other factors that can affect male and female fertility and the health of the baby:

- some medical conditions and medications, including herbal or alternative medicines
- untreated sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- a history of genital surgery or having mumps as an adult
- recreational drugs and the use of anabolic steroids
- exposure to pesticides, heavy metals, toxic chemicals, harmful plastics or radiation, all of which can affect fertility.

Talk to your doctor if any of these factors apply to you.

Here are some things you can do to give your baby the best start in life:

- for women, taking folic acid tablets for the two months or more before conception and in the first three months of pregnancy to reduce the risk of birth defects
- for women, German Measles (Rubella) in pregnancy can cause severe birth defects. Your doctor will order a test to make sure you are immune to Rubella and if you are not, you should be vaccinated before you conceive
- for women and men, avoiding exposure to chemicals at home and at work.

## Questions to ask your doctor

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[www.yourfertility.org.au](http://www.yourfertility.org.au)

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