



Nutrition Before Pregnancy: The Basics

Simple, evidence-based steps to prepare, based on NHS guidance

If you are planning a pregnancy, a few well-established nutrition steps can help prepare your body. This is general guidance based on NHS advice, not personalised medical care. Please speak to your GP or midwife, who can tailor it to you and your history.

The single most important step: take a 400 microgram folic acid supplement every day while you are trying to conceive and until you are 12 weeks pregnant, ideally starting about 3 months before. It helps prevent neural tube defects such as spina bifida. If you are at higher risk, your GP may prescribe a higher 5 mg dose.

Your daily supplements

- **Folic acid:** 400 micrograms a day, as above.
- **Vitamin D:** 10 micrograms a day, all year while trying and through pregnancy.
- A conception or pregnancy multivitamin can be convenient, but check it does NOT contain vitamin A (retinol), which is not safe in pregnancy.

Build a healthy foundation

- Eat a balanced diet: plenty of fruit and vegetables (5+ a day), wholegrain starchy carbs, protein, and dairy or fortified alternatives.
- Include iron (lean meat, beans, lentils, leafy greens) and calcium.
- Aim for a healthy weight before conception, as both under- and over-weight can affect fertility and pregnancy.

What to cut back or stop

- **Alcohol:** the safest option when trying to conceive, and in pregnancy, is none.
- **Caffeine:** keep to 200 mg a day or less, about 2 mugs of instant coffee.
- **Smoking:** stop, and ask your GP for support.

It is not only about the mother. A healthy balanced diet, a healthy weight and cutting back on alcohol support sperm health too, so it helps for both partners to prepare together.

See your GP or midwife

Preconception care is a great reason to see your GP, especially if you have a health condition, take medication, or have had a previous pregnancy complication. They can review your medicines, check your health, and give advice tailored to you.

Where to learn more: the NHS (planning your pregnancy, folic acid and vitamin D), the British Nutrition Foundation, and the British Dietetic Association (BDA). Preconception and pregnancy care should be led by your GP and midwife.

This leaflet is general nutritional guidance for education only, based on NHS public health advice. It is not medical advice, diagnosis, treatment or antenatal care, and it does not replace your GP, midwife or a registered dietitian. Always seek their advice, particularly if you have a health condition or take medication.

Ready to take the next step? Book a free call or start your food diary analysis at performancenutritionlondon.co.uk