

- Five ante-natal examinations during the course of the last three months of pregnancy.
- Such other examinations and ante-natal care as your G.P. considers necessary
- Attendance at the confinement by your G.P. if s/he feels this is necessary.
- A visit on at least one occasion in the week following delivery.
- A six week check-up for you and your baby, which can be done at the hospital or by your G.P.
- Any other examinations and post-natal care within the period of six weeks after the delivery as your G.P. considers necessary.

In preparing this information sheet, we hope we have covered most of the areas that you would like information on. If you have any other queries, do not hesitate to contact any of our clinics and make an appointment to speak with any of our medical staff.



Prepregnancy Advice

Choosing a Method of Contraception

This is one of our series of leaflets that outlines some of the different methods of contraception available and gives you information on the advantages and disadvantages of each. Leaflets in this series include:

The Combined Oral Contraceptive Pill

The Mini Pill

Intrauterine Contraceptive Devices

Emergency Contraception

Implants and Injectable Contraception

We have also produced information leaflets on:

Safe Sex and Sexually Transmitted Infections

Prepregnancy Advice

Our leaflets are designed to give an overview of the various topics. We also stock more detailed information leaflets on a wide range of women's health issues.



Clinics

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Prepregnancy Advice



Rubella

Rubella, or **German Measles**, as it is more commonly known, causes a mild viral illness in most people, but for pregnant women who are not immune to **Rubella**, it may have devastating consequences for the pregnancy. If you got your **Rubella** vaccine in school, you are probably immune, but a small number of people don't develop any immunity. This can be checked with a simple blood test. If you are not immune, then you can get a booster vaccination, but it is important not to get pregnant for three months after the booster.

Smears

All women who have been sexually active for more than 18 months should have a smear test. If you have not had one for more than two years, then it is important to have one before you get pregnant.

Folic Acid

Folic acid is involved with the development of the baby's spinal cord and brain. There is **folic acid** in a lot of food but, when pregnant, you need more. It is recommended that most women who are planning a pregnancy should start to take **folic acid** three months before they actively try to conceive.

Why is this so important? – The baby's spinal cord is formed 28 days into the pregnancy. This is the time when most women are just realising that they are pregnant. **Folic acid helps to prevent Spina bifida (a problem with the development of the spinal chord) and Anencephaly (i.e. babies born with little or no**

brain tissue). Folic acid should be continued for up to three months into the pregnancy.

Diet

When trying to get pregnant many women are concerned about what they should and shouldn't eat.

- **All soft cheeses** should be avoided (especially Brie, Camembert, etc.) and any unpasteurised cheese.
- **All liver and liver products** should also be avoided, as they contain large amounts of Vitamin A which can be dangerous for the baby (cod liver oil tablets, patés etc.).
- **Raw meats** – Ensure all your meat is well cooked, especially chicken.
- **Eggs** – Do not eat raw eggs. Be careful when eating out as some dishes may contain raw eggs. Always ask. Take extra care when purchasing prepared convenience food and remember to check the sell-by date.
- **Peanuts/nuts** – Some evidence now links exposure to nuts during pregnancy to an increase in the number of children developing nut allergies. It is recommended that you reduce your consumption of nuts during pregnancy.

Remember, there is no need to eat for two. Just eat a healthy, wholesome, sensible diet. You can expect to gain around 28lbs by the end of your pregnancy.

Alcohol

We would recommend that most women reduce their consumption of alcohol during the entire pregnancy. This is important, especially during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy when all of the organs are being formed.

Medicine

During pregnancy it is advisable not to take medication. However, while you are trying to conceive, you may have cause to take some antibiotics or painkillers. There are a number of both which are safe to take while trying to get pregnant and during a pregnancy. Your G.P. will be able to advise you.

Painkillers - Paracetamol is safe to take, but only at the recommended dose.

Do not take Aspirin / Brufen / Nurofen at any stage during pregnancy.

Exercise

Leading up to and during pregnancy, it is very important that you get sufficient exercise, but at the same time, the wrong type can do more harm than good. If you attend a gym, then you should talk to the instructors there as to what you can and can't do. Walking, swimming and cycling are all good exercises, and there are a number of books available in most good bookstores on exercise during pregnancy.

Pets

If you have any pets, you should ensure that all their vaccinations are up to date. When handling cat litter, you should wear gloves or preferably get someone else to do it. You should also wear gloves when gardening, and remember to wash your hands before preparing food if you have been near your pet.

Smoking

Smoking is harmful to you and your baby. It is also believed that smoking can reduce your chances of conceiving. Most doctors would recommend that you stop smoking from when you start trying to conceive. If, however, you feel unable to stop smoking altogether, we would recommend that you reduce the number of cigarettes you smoke by as much as possible.

Maternity entitlements

When you get pregnant, you are entitled to free medical care for you and your baby up until 6 weeks post-natal. You can apply to your local health board for this by getting a form from your G.P. called the Green form.

What are you entitled to under the Mother Child scheme?

- An initial examination to be carried out no later than the 28th week of pregnancy by your appointed G.P.