



## Common Questions About Preconception Care

### You are about to embark in one of the most important journeys of your life...

The creation of a new, unique and very special little person. These are very exciting and sometimes overwhelming times. The most direct way you and your partner can positively affect fertility, the course of pregnancy, the birth and the health of your baby is making intelligent and informed dietary, environmental and lifestyle choices even before falling pregnant

### Why Is Preconception Care Important?

In Western countries there is a rising rate of health problems regarding fertility, pregnancy, birth and children's health. Currently one out of six couples is infertile, one woman in five will miscarry, one baby in ten is born prematurely, and one baby in thirty is born with a congenital defect. One child in ten suffers from learning or behavioural problems and one in five children suffers from asthma

Many of these marked changes are thought to be a result of poorer general and reproductive health due to our modern lifestyle bursting with environmental and water pollution, poor nutrient levels in the soil and foods, toxic farming methods, chemicals, radiation, heavy metal exposure, sedentary lifestyle, weight problems, high sugar intake, caffeine and alcohol, and general stress of modern living

The idea behind preconception care is to improve fertility and the health of the egg and sperm by bringing the future parents back to optimal health before conception in order to maximise the baby's chances of a healthy constitution and the best possible start for life

The aim of the health care practitioner is to ensure:

- The presence of all essential nutrients necessary for the formation of a healthy embryo;
- The absence of toxins that could hinder this process and
- Optimum general and reproductive health in both parents

### For How Long?

Preconception health care should be followed for a minimum of four months for both parents continued with support for the pregnant and breast feeding mother

### What Role Does Preconception Care Have For Men?

Preconception care is just as important for men as for women. Men contribute with half of the genetic material that makes up your baby. It takes sperm three months to develop so that they are able to fertilise an egg; consequently preconception care for men is recommended for at least three months prior to attempting conception

The guidelines for men are very similar to those provided for women (see other handouts in the "Preconception & Pregnancy" series). Following these steps greatly improves the health of the sperm and the chances of a healthy conception and baby

