

LIFESTYLE ADVICE FOR FERTILITY CLINIC PATIENTS

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.....

Following your appointment with your GP, you have now been referred to the Fertility Team at Worcester Royal Hospital. You will receive your appointment through the post. When you attend your hospital appointment, please bring your partner with you so you can be cared for as a couple.

At your appointment with the Fertility Team, we will ask you both questions about your history and go through the results of all the investigations that your GP has organised for you. You do not need to see your GP again in the meantime to get your results. Together we will then make a plan of care for how best to help you both have a baby. In some cases this may involve some further investigations, medications or referral for IVF.

In the meantime please help us help you as much as possible by reading the below information.

SMOKING

Smoking in both men & women will decrease the chances of conceiving and affect general health. For men there is a link between smoking and poorer semen quality.

- **For help to stop smoking please visit www.smokefree.nhs.uk, NHS Smoking Helpline 0300 123 1044 or your local Lloyds pharmacy.**

Passive smoking is also likely to affect chances of conception.

If you are eligible for NHS funded assisted conception (such as IVF) , it is necessary for couples to have ceased smoking for at least 6 months prior to referral for treatment including the use of nicotine replacement products. Testing to confirm this may be performed at the treatment centre.

ALCOHOL

It is recommended that women who are trying to conceive should not drink more than 1-2 units of alcohol once or twice a week. Episodes of intoxication should be avoided as this reduces the risk of potential harm to the developing fetus.

It is recommended for men that provided their alcohol consumption is within the Department of Health's recommendations of 3 units per day; semen quality is unlikely to be affected.

Intoxication for men however can seriously affect sperm quality.

OBESITY

Women with a BMI of 29 or over may experience longer time taken to conceive and in those who are not ovulating (releasing an egg every month), losing weight is likely to increase their chances of conception.

Men who have a BMI of 29 or over are also likely to have reduced fertility and should therefore reduce their weight accordingly.

Group exercise & diet programmes are proven to increase the success of losing weight thus improving chances of conception and overall general health.

You will find a wealth of information on the NHS Choices website to help you achieve this.

PLEASE NOTE THAT BOTH THE MALE & FEMALE PARTNER REQUIRE A BMI OF 29 OR BELOW FOR REFERRAL FOR NHS FUNDED IVF. Other treatments may be possible if your BMI is higher than this.

LOW BODY WEIGHT

Likewise women with a low BMI, less than 19 with irregular cycles will also have a reduced chance of success. Increasing weight is likely to improve these chances

DRUGS

There are a number of prescription, over-the-counter and recreational drugs which have an effect on both female & male fertility. It is important to discuss any drug that you may be taking with the doctors and nurses in Fertility Clinic.

FOLIC ACID

It is important that women that are trying to conceive should be taking Folic Acid daily, ideally for 3 months prior to conception. This has been shown to reduce the risk of having a baby with a neural tube defect, such as Spina Bifida.

Please take 400 micrograms per day up until 12 weeks of pregnancy.

If your BMI is greater than 29 and/or you have Diabetes, take anti-epileptic medications, suffer with malabsorption conditions such as inflammatory bowel conditions or previously had a baby with neural tube defect, **please take 5mg per day.**

FREQUENCY OF INTERCOURSE

To optimise the chances of conception, it is advisable to have regular intercourse, 2-3 times per week on alternated days.

TIGHT FITTING UNDERWEAR

Whilst it is uncertain whether wearing loose-fitting underwear improves fertility in men, it is advisable as there is a known association between elevated scrotal temperatures and reduced semen quality.

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES

Further research is required to determine whether complementary therapies increase the chances of conception so they cannot be recommended for that purpose.

Some people however find that treatments can improve their general well-being during what is often an incredibly anxious and stressful time.

USEFUL RESOURCES

<https://www.nhs.uk/livewell/Pages/Livewellhub.aspx>

<http://fertilitynetworkuk.org/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/livewell/loseweight/>



For further information and support please contact Danielle Williams, Fertility Specialist Nurse
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