

WEEK 1

BEFORE BABY

BEETROOT
THE BEAUTIFUL

NEW YEAR
FINANCIAL GOALS

PRE-PREGNANCY
PILATES
THE FOUNDATIONS

YOUR
BEFORE
BABY
CHECKLIST

TRUSTING
YOU'VE
GOT THIS

FERTILITY
101
WHAT YOU
NEED TO KNOW
MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS BUSTED



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welcome

2021 has brought its fair share of challenges, but it has also put things into perspective. Going through a once-in-100-years event like a pandemic has, for many people, demonstrated the importance of family and helped them focus on what they want in life. It's easy to put things off, thinking that there's going to be time in the future, but when these sort of events happen it's a reminder not to delay your plans.

If your goal is to start a family, it can be disappointing to find, in many cases, it may not be as easy as you had expected. We spend our younger years worrying about getting pregnant, only realising later in life that getting pregnant can be difficult. Life is stressful enough navigating

our professional and personal lives, and adding trying to fall pregnant to the mix can feel like pressure building. This is why it's so important to be proactive and feel like you're ready for baby, before baby. It's not just about what health professionals do for you, it's also about what you do for yourself.

In this issue of Before Baby, we set you up for success by busting the biggest myths around conception and guiding your financial goals for the new year. We also explore fertility-friendly Pilates moves, share a delicious recipe, and examine the role of setting healthy boundaries in emotional health. I hope you find it helpful and am so glad to be on this journey with you.

“One of the biggest things that contributes to difficulties with conceiving is stress.”

Kate Munnings,
Virtus Health Group CEO



fertility

fertility 101

what you need to know

It's the most 'natural thing in the world', but that doesn't mean getting pregnant is always easy. Here, we bust some of the biggest myths and misconceptions about fertility.

MYTH

A woman's age doesn't impact fertility

No matter what you might have heard, age absolutely does have an impact on a woman's fertility – in fact, it's the single most important factor. Egg count and quality both decline as women get older, particularly after the age of 36. There's also an increased risk of miscarriage and chromosomal variations through ageing – so that's worth knowing.

MYTH

Men remain fertile into old age

There's a common misconception that men can continue fathering children well into their 60s, 70s and even 80s, but the reality is that a man's age does contribute to infertility. Sperm quality declines with age, and the chance of 'sperm DNA damage' increases – which can cause complications in both pregnancy and after birth. That means it's important to start thinking about fertility early, rather than assuming age won't be a factor in your family plans. .

MYTH

You can get pregnant at any point in your cycle

Here's a fact that might blow your mind: women only have a 20 per cent chance of conceiving each month. The only time you can get pregnant are in the days leading up to ovulation – that's before the egg is released from the ovary, not necessarily during ovulation itself. This means the sperm, which can fertilise for two to three days, are already waiting in the fallopian tubes when you ovulate. So to get pregnant, the best time to have sex is at least every two or three days during your pre-ovulation 'fertile window'.

Click [here](#) to calculate your fertile window

MYTH

Fertility issues are usually due to a problem on the women's side

In 35 per cent of cases, infertility is caused by female factors, but in an equal 35 per cent, the issue is on the man's side. In another 20 per cent of cases, it's due to a combination of factors on both sides, and the remaining 10 per cent is unexplained.

For men concerned about their fertility levels, it's a good idea to get a semen analysis test to measure the number of sperm, their motility (ability to move), size and shape, volume and consistency.

MYTH

You should 'save up' sperm so it becomes more potent

Ever heard someone say that a man should store up his sperm by limiting ejaculation? This is totally untrue. You actually need frequent ejaculation so that the best swimmers are continually ready to fertilise the egg, so it's a good idea to ejaculate every two to three days to improve sperm health and increase motility.


It's not always easy to figure out when you're ovulating. At-home ovulation tests (available from pharmacies) or apps can be useful, but if you need a bit more help we offer ovulation cycle tracking, blood tests to monitor your cycle as well as ovulation induction, a pill to bring on ovulation.



Concerned about your fertility and want to chat to a specialist?

We've got you covered.

Contact us to get the conversation started.



If you're about to move from contraception to conception, there are a few key steps you can take which will not only boost your fertility but also ensure your lifestyle and health is prepped and ready to welcome a baby.

your 'Before Baby' checklist

VISIT YOUR DOCTOR

An important step is to visit your Doctor for a pre-conception health check-up. This could include antenatal blood tests, including checks for rubella and chickenpox status, blood group and antibodies, Rh factor, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C, HIV, syphilis, and a full blood count.

They'll ensure that your cervical screening test is up to date and review any current medications and their implications for pregnancy. It's

also a good opportunity to re-connect and develop a positive relationship with your Doctor – they will often be your go-to source of support as you navigate this new chapter in your life!

REVIEW YOUR LIFESTYLE TO GIVE FERTILITY A BOOST

Wondering how to boost your chances? Regardless of what stage of the pre-pregnancy journey you're at, it makes sense that you'd want to give your body the best chance of

conception. Some simple lifestyle changes can make a big difference. We recommend both you and your partner, if applicable, adopt these simple lifestyle strategies.

AVOID SMOKING

Did you know that smoking damages the DNA in eggs and sperm? This means that it may become more difficult and take longer to conceive if you or your partner smokes. Clear the air for your fertility and avoid smoking.

DO NOT TAKE BODY-BUILDING STEROIDS

Although testosterone is associated with enhanced “maleness” any use on anabolic can suppress sperm production. Do not do this if you are trying to have a family. Avoid recreational drugs, too. For both partners, recreational drugs can have a negative impact on natural fertility. For example, studies have shown that smoking cannabis can affect the sperm’s swimming capacity.

ENJOY ALCOHOL ONLY IN MODERATION

Having a glass of wine at the end of a long week may typically be your go-to, and that’s ok. If you’re trying to conceive, we recommend both partners stick within the safe drinking guidelines – no more than 2 standard drinks per day. And try prioritising some alcohol-free days per week. Once pregnancy is achieved, there is no safe amount of alcohol.

START YOUR FOLIC ACID ENGINES

Folic acid is a form of the B vitamin folate, a crucial ingredient for growing a healthy baby. Start taking folic acid tablets at least one month before conception and continuing throughout your pregnancy to reduce the risk of neural tube birth defects such as spina bifida. You may also want to review other pre-pregnancy supplements with your Doctor.

MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT WITH A BALANCED DIET AND EXERCISE

Take the opportunity to check in with your body – because weight can impact fertility. This is because being significantly overweight or underweight can disrupt the hormones that regulate both ovulation and sperm production. The main goal here is to help your body be in the best possible health, rather than worrying about a number on a scale. Focus on eating right, with consistent exercise habits - this will ultimately improve your fertility as well as long-term physical and mental wellbeing.

**IN NEXT WEEK’S ISSUE,
WE’LL UNPACK THE
COMMON FACTORS THAT
CAN IMPACT FERTILITY.
PLUS, WHAT ACTUALLY
IS “INFERTILITY”?**

STAY TUNED.

**KEEP TURNING
THE PAGES FOR
ANTIOXIDANT-RICH
RECIPES AND EASY
EXERCISES TO
KICK-START YOUR
NEW YEAR GOALS.**



nutrition

beetroot, the beautiful

While all vegetables warrant a place in your fertility diet, beetroots deserve a special mention for some pretty impressive nutrition stats.

Our resident Fertility and Pre-natal Dietician, Wendy Fedele, explains, “beetroot is one of the richest food sources of Nitrates, which are converted in your body to a compound called nitric oxide and play a role in improving blood and oxygen supply to your body. That’s why beetroot may theoretically assist with implantation, as we need a good blood supply to the uterus for the embryo to implant.”

Beetroot is also a great source of dietary fibre and packed with fertility supporting nutrients, such as Iron, Vitamin A, Vitamin E, Zinc, Selenium, and folate. Folate is a highly important Vitamin that helps reduce the risk of neural tube defects as the baby develops in pregnancy, plus folate is associated with improved fertility. Wendy adds, “100g of beetroot provides more than ¼ of your preconception folate needs!”

And if that wasn’t enough to convince you to eat more beets – they’re also loaded with antioxidants/ polyphenols, which can help protect

against oxidative stress and may therefore help protect the health of egg and sperm cells.

Need some inspiration to get more beetroot in your life? Try the flavour-packed lemon-baked chicken with beetroot, green bean, and walnut salad.

Everyone’s dietary needs are unique. Be sure to discuss any recommendations with a physician or other healthcare professional.

Mediterranean Cod with Roasted Tomatoes



Ingredients

- 3 tbsps Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- 3 tpsps Capers
- 2 tbsps Shallot (peeled, finely sliced)
- 2 Garlic (cloves, smashed and sliced thin)
- 1 ½ cups Cherry Tomatoes (halved)
- ¾ cup Water
- ½ tsp Sea Salt (divided)
- 2 Cod Fillet
- ¼ Parsley (roughly chopped)
- ¼ Lemon (cut into wedges)

Notes:

Fillet Size:

One cod fillet is equal to 231 grams or 8 ounces.

Leftovers:

Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to two days.

More Flavour:

Add ½ tsp red pepper flakes to the shallot and garlic when cooking for more spice.

Additional Toppings:

Serve with a grain such as rice, quinoa or couscous.

No Cod: Use another fish such as halibut.

Directions

1. Heat a large cast-iron skillet over medium heat. Once hot, add the olive oil and capers. Let them sizzle and crisp for about three minutes. Lower the heat to medium-low and then add the shallot and garlic. Cook for one to two minutes, until fragrant and the shallot is crispy. Transfer the capers, shallot, and garlic to a bowl, leaving a bit of oil behind in the skillet.
2. Add the halved cherry tomatoes to the skillet and cook for about seven to eight minutes or until jammy. Add the water and half the salt. Cook until thickened slight, about four to five minutes.
3. Season the cod with the remaining salt. Add to the skillet, cover and cook for five to seven minutes, or until cooked through.
4. Divide the cod onto plates along with the tomatoes. Drizzle the remaining oil, capers, and shallots mixture on top. Garnish with parsley and serve with a lemon wedge. Enjoy!
5. from the bottom of the dish over the chicken every 5 minutes or so
6. Top with lemon slices and serve with the beetroot salad.

pre-pregnancy pilates

the foundations

For the full workout with Fiona – watch the 40-minute guided Pilates class [here](#).

Welcome to week one of four, of our Pilates classes. Meet your personal Pilates instructor, Fiona Malone, owner of The Eloquent Body, Professional Specialist Pilates and Movement Instructor. This week focuses on the foundation of Pilates.

Whether you're a first-timer to Pilates, or have been attending Pilates classes for years, it is so important to understand the mind-body-breath connection, check that your technique is correct, and your body is in alignment.

Each week, we will build on the previous class and gradually progress and incorporate more advanced, strengthening moves. This is a full 40-minute class so take the time to [watch this video](#) and lay the foundations for the weeks to come.

Here's a snippet of a few of the exercises we will perform in class 1.



the bridge

The Bridge is all about getting your spine moving, connecting your breath, and checking in with your body. Spine articulation (movement) is key to being able to connect your abdominals correctly. The Bridge exercise is a great way to loosen up your spine, breathe, access your pelvic floor, open up your hip flexors, working through your hamstrings and glutes. Do this exercise daily to check in with your-self and keep yourself feeling supple.



knee floats

This move is a must-do for focusing on the correct use of your pelvic floor muscles and stabilising the muscles around the pelvis. Something to watch out for with this move – try not to use your hip flexors or let your back arch off the floor – focus on targeting your pelvic floor. Feel free to use a little pillow under your head if you are uncomfortable flat on the floor.



chest lifts

Chest lifts are a classic movement that not only helps to strengthen your abdominals, but it also builds your shoulder girdle, lats and helps stretch your thoracic spine (upper back). Take a wide breath in, then on your exhale, lift your pelvic floor, draw your belly button to the spine, and use your lats to lift the chest towards the knee. Be careful not to push your belly outward, and focus on that inhale, ex-hale.



Trust is a vital part of life – we need to trust ourselves, our loved ones, our community and – to some extent – that the universe has our back. Here’s how to build trust, according to an expert.

emotional health

trusting you’ve ‘got this’

Trust plays a key role in healthy relationships, says psychotherapist, social worker and fertility counsellor Judith Krause. Trying to have a baby can be a stressful time, but there are a couple of things that can help when it comes to trust and communicating – whether it’s with your partner, family, friends or medical team – in a way that builds it.

Being clear is kind, being unclear is unkind.

Communicate clearly with those around you – ask for support when you need it whether it’s at home, at work or in your relationships.

Use ‘I’ statements.

As soon as we use the word ‘you’, people put up their defence mechanism,” Krause explains. “They’re no longer listening to what the other person has to say, they’re starting to formulate words in their mind that they’re going to say back. Using ‘I’ statements can be helpful in building trust and feeling safe.”

Listen.

Trust is about feeling seen and heard, and that means listening in return. “That’s why I think we’ve got two ears and one mouth – so that we can listen twice as much as we speak,” Krause suggests.

Trust that you are enough.

“Believe that you’re enough, that you’re worthy of love and belonging, and that you have the capacity to be vulnerable and just be you. Trust is a feeling - it needs to be earned, in

small moments, many times over.” And that goes for building trust in yourself, too!

Trust that you are enough.

“We can’t ask others to give us something we don’t believe we are worthy of receiving, and we can’t give to others what we don’t have ourselves.”

In other words, no matter what your goal is for 2022 – you’ve got this.

And we’ve got you!

Listen to the podcast [here](#).

finance

your new year financial goals

Whatever your plans for 2022, getting your finances on track can make a big difference. Tilly Money shares their tips.

Even though this last year probably didn't go the way you intended it, 2022 clears the slate and brings the opportunity to set new goals. One of the most valuable things you can do for yourself and your family this year is to take charge of your finances. And you won't be alone, nearly 70 per cent of people make a new year's resolution to save more money or better their financial position. But even if financial goals aren't at the top of your to-do list, it's a good time to check in on your financial health, regardless of how you intend to spend your hard-earned cash.

Here are Tilly Money's steps to your new year financial health check:

- Write down your goals – whether it's eliminating debt or saving for a house, think about your financial goals. Write them down first, then you can make a plan to achieve them.
- Figure out a budget – this will help you find areas where you could spend less and save more. You can use a notebook, spreadsheet, app (try Pocketbook, Money brilliant or Moneytree) or the template via the link below.
- GST your life – take 10 per cent off what you currently spend and put it into a savings account.
- Take charge of your debt – 'good debt' is a loan that could increase your net worth (think: a home loan), while 'bad debt' is borrowing for something that depreciates in value (like a car). Aiming to eliminate bad debt can put you in a much stronger financial position.



Read more financial health tips [here](#).



+ 65 6460 4555