

WEEK 2

BEFORE BABY

prepping your
bank for
parenthood

PRE-PREGNANCY
PILATES

the foundations, cont

YOUR FERTILITY
CHECKUP

practicing
self compassion

oh my, Omega 3
the fatty acid superstar

WHAT IS INFERTILITY?



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welcome

In the past, fertility was something people didn't give much thought to until they were ready to start a family. But in the age of Dr Google, more and more people are wanting to be informed about their fertility in advance. If you understand the challenges you may have down the track, you can make informed choices. Having trusted sources of information can help you make good decisions for your future family – and that's what Before Baby aims to do.

Infertility has only recently been considered a disease, and it's the fifth or six most significant chronic disease in most western countries. So if infertility is affecting you, you're certainly not alone. At Virtus Health, we recognise that although

infertility is common, every person experiencing it is different. That's why we're focused on personalising our services to your unique circumstances – to look after YOU.

In this issue of Before Baby, we give a run-down of what infertility actually means, and provide a 'fertility check-up', helping you get a handle on potential fertility challenges. We also look at preparing for the cost of parenthood, because although the joy children bring you is immeasurable, there's no way around it – they're expensive. We share a delicious Greek salad recipe, stretch into new Pilates moves and look at the emotional benefits of self-compassion. We hope you get lots of valuable information from this issue.

“Although infertility is common, every person experiencing it is different.”

Kate Munnings,
Virtus Health Group CEO



what is infertility?

How do you know if infertility is an issue for you, and what should you do if you suspect it is? If you're thinking about parenthood, let us answer some of your pressing questions.

You've probably heard the term 'infertility', but do you know what it actually means? Infertility is defined as the inability to conceive a pregnancy after 12 months of unprotected sexual intercourse. It's more common than you'd think, affecting around one in six Aussie couples of reproductive age.

To help us understand infertility, check out the answers to some of these common questions.

What are the most common causes of infertility

In women, the main causes of infertility are:

Ovulation issues or irregular periods

Not ovulating, or having irregular no periods

Polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS)

This common hormone problem is the leading cause of infertility

Endometriosis

A condition where uterus-lining cells grow outside the uterus

Blocked or damaged fallopian tubes

This can impact the sperm's ability to reach the egg.

Uterine fibroids

Benign lumps of tissue that can grow around and inside the uterus.

Sometimes, you may not know that you have underlying conditions like PCOS or ovulation issues until you start trying to conceive without success. This is one of the reasons why it makes sense to come off any form of contraception a month or two before starting to try. It may take your body some time to adjust, and you'll be able to track your natural cycle to get the timing right - or to seek advice from a GP if your cycle continues to be irregular.

For men, the most common causes are:

Abnormal sperm production

Having a lower-than-normal sperm production, no sperm present at all, or having a high proportion of sperm that is abnormally shaped

High sperm DNA fragmentation

This can affect a sperm's ability to fertilise an egg

Sperm antibodies

It's not common, but sometimes anti-sperm antibodies can interfere with mobility and fertilisation.

It's good to be aware that male infertility is the second biggest issue after a woman's age. Thankfully, though, there are several treatments available to help a couple make the best of sperm quality and quantity as it is and achieve a pregnancy.

Ok, so how is infertility treated?

There's a range of fertility treatments available - the right ones for you will depend on what your fertility test results indicate. Treatments may include ovulation cycle tracking, ovulation induction, artificial insemination, in vitro fertilisation or fertility surgery. We'll go into more detail on this in next week's issue. There are also some advanced science options such as pre-implantation genetic testing - which we'll delve into more in Week 4. .



If you already know some of the factors we mentioned apply to you, and it's taking longer than you expected to fall pregnant, we're here to help.

Contact us to book an appointment with a fertility specialist.

couples fertility check-up

If you've been trying to conceive for some time, you might be worried something is not quite right. But when should you seek help from a specialist? And what tests might they arrange to assess you or your partner's fertility?

We've got the answers.

If you've already been trying to get pregnant for more than 12 months – or more than six months if you're over the age of 35 – without success, it's a good idea to book a couples fertility health check. Here's a quick overview of the kinds of tests available to help determine what's going on.



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AMH test

This tests your levels of the anti-mullerian hormone, indicating your ovarian reserve. Although the test doesn't reveal the quality of your eggs, it will give a good indication of the quantity of your eggs remaining and compare that to others in your age group.

If you have a low AMH result, it's easy to think "Oh dear, I'm infertile". But the reality is, women who have a low ovarian reserve and women who have a high ovarian reserve fall pregnant naturally at exactly the same rate – age is still the primary factor. It sounds confusing, but both women are releasing one egg per month and the AMH test doesn't tell us what the quality of that egg is. What it does tell us though, is whether you might want to consider your reproductive options sooner rather than later.

Semen analysis

The most important male fertility test is the semen analysis, which measures the quality and quantity of sperm.

Pelvic ultrasound

A check of your uterus to detect conditions such as fibroids or ovarian cysts. It also provides a glimpse into the lining of your womb and can detect signs of blocked fallopian tubes.

Ovulation test

This is a simple blood test to check if ovulation is occurring each month.

A fertility health check can provide a clear picture of your overall reproductive health and take into consideration both you

and your partner's past medical history. A couple's consultation with one of our participating fertility specialists, who can explain the results and develop a plan for pregnancy.

Knowledge is powerful. If you've been trying to conceive for some time and you're searching for answers – or you simply want to know what you're working with – we can help make that happen.



Contact us or click [here](#) to book a check-up.

Fertility Fact

Did you know that the lifecycle of sperm is only 72 days? In other words, those lifestyle changes we recommended in the last issue could improve the quality of sperm within just a few months!

oh my, Omega 3

the fatty acid superstar



If you're trying to conceive or planning for pregnancy, it's time to start looking at your fatty acid profile.

Wendy Fedele, a Fertility and Prenatal Dietitian, says that the types of fats in our diet have a big impact on our fertility. "One type of fat that we definitely want more of are Omega 3 fatty acids. Studies have linked Omega 3 fats to reduced inflammation, better egg health and embryo quality and higher rates of embryo implantation," says Wendy.

She adds that Omega 3s are also associated with improved sperm quality, "this isn't surprising given that a particular type of Omega 3, DHA, is a crucial part of the sperm structure."

The good news? Consuming just 2-3 serves of oily Omega 3 rich fish each week such as salmon, sardines, mackerel, herring, trout, or anchovies can help you meet your preconception needs. Wendy adds, "Consuming this amount of fish and seafood is associate with a faster time to pregnancy... plus, these couples had more sex!"

It is important, though, to avoid high mercury fish such as shark (flake), swordfish, marlin, orange roughy and catfish, as higher intakes of mercury can impact your baby's development. If you don't eat fish or seafood, make sure you chat to your friendly dietitian or GP about whether an Omega 3 supplement is right for you and the suggested dosage. Vegan supplements derived from Algal oil are also available.

Looking to boost your Omega 3 intake? Try this week's "Before Baby" recipe: Mediterranean Crusted Sardines with Greek Salad. Not only are sardines an excellent, low mercury source of Omega 3s, but they're also packed with other fertility supporting nutrients and an excellent source of well-absorbed iron.

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

iodine-packed berry & nut breakfast bowl



Notes:

Leftovers:

Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to two days. Keep the almond milk, berries and nuts separately until ready to serve.

Additional Toppings:

Add a pinch of cinnamon, shredded coconut, additional nuts and seeds, a dollop of yogurt or a drizzle of honey.

No Berries:

Use peaches, mango, pineapple or banana instead.

No Almond Milk:

Use another non-dairy milk instead.

Ingredients

- 1 cup Strawberries (chopped)
- 1 cup Blackberries (cut in half)
- 1/4 cup Walnuts (chopped)
- 1/4 cup Almonds (chopped)
- 2 tbsps Pumpkin Seeds
- 2 tbsps Hemp Seeds
- 1/2 Unsweetened Almond Milk

To make the Greek Salad

1. Add strawberries and blackberries to a bowl. Top with the nuts and seeds.
2. Pour the almond milk over top and enjoy!

pre-pregnancy pilates

the foundations, cont

In this week's Pilates class, we will continue to build on the foundation exercises, while slowly increasing the intensity. "There's still a focus on the pelvic floor as we know that the stronger your pelvic floor, the more support your whole body will have as you prepare for pregnancy, and the

faster you will 'bounce back' after birth," says Pilates Instructor, Fiona.

Ready to get started? This is a full 40-minute class, so take the time to watch your personal 'Before Baby' Pilates instructor, Fiona Malone, guide you through the movements.

Read on below for a snippet of some of the exercises for this week.

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



seated pelvic floor exercise

The Seated Pelvic Floor is a fundamental exercise in Pilates, as it helps build awareness and strength of your pelvic floor. This exercise also demonstrates the connection between breath, movement of the diaphragm and the pelvic floor. Don't be fooled – although it doesn't look like much, the focus is all on internal movement!



the bridge with heel raises

This move is a variation on last week's exercise and concentrates spine articulation to help reduce pressure on the lower back by moving the spine, connecting the breath, working your deep stabilisers, strengthening the glutes and hamstrings, and opening the hips at the same time. Fiona adds, "A gentle rotated stretch after this exercise will allow your body to drop the tension and lengthens all the major muscle groups in your body."



oh my, obliques

This move is an advancement on the chest lifts that were introduced last week, and challenges your oblique abdominal muscles, Transversus Abdominis, pelvic floor and deep stabilisers. Do 10 repetitions on each side and prepare to feel the burn!

emotional health

understanding shame

Shame can affect our relationships and the way we feel about ourselves – and yet we feel it for a whole range of reasons. Here are some expert ways to combat shame.

Remember that an expectation is resentment waiting to happen, so make sure that your expectations are realistic.

Practice self compassion

“Speak kindly to yourself and don’t give yourself a hard time because you didn’t do something that your perfectionism said needed to be of a certain standard”. We’ll explore selfcompassion more in next week’s issue.

Share your feelings with a trusted friend.

“Shame festers in secrecy, but it can’t survive empathy,” Krause says. “Shame can’t survive with words wrapped around it. If we choose to share our difficult moments, with the people who’ve earned the right to hear our story, that will help us feel better.”

Listen to the podcast [here](#).



finance

prepping your bank for parenthood

Having children is wonderful, but it can be challenging financially. Here are some ways to prepare.

Whether you're contemplating starting a family or expanding, getting your finances in order is a good idea

Tilly Money shares these tips for cutting back your expenses before baby arrives:

- Call your phone and internet supplier to ensure you're on best deal.
- Take a look at your car, home and life insurance to see if you could get cheaper policies. Shop around!
- Understand your health insurance. Are you getting the best deal? Have you adjusted for family rates? And do you want private cover during your pregnancy? If so, you'll need to add pregnancy to your policy well before you fall pregnant.
- If you own a home, are you paying the lowest interest rate? Call your loan provider and check.
- Rid yourself of as much debt as possible – pay them down, bit by bit.
- Plan for parental leave. While you might be paid, you need to work out how far that will go in relation to how long you're taking off.
- Draft a pre and post baby budget. We'll have tips on how to do this in next week's issue.
- Open a baby bank account. Deposit regular amounts that you can either use for your child's future or as an emergency fund.
- Check any government entitlements you're eligible to receive from Centrelink such as Parental Leave Pay and Partner Pay.

Click [here](#) to read more of Tilly Money's helpful finance tips.



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