

MEDI PAK

# the fertility diet

Eating certain foods can improve your chances of conceiving, says dietitian Geraldine Georgeou

So, you've decided it's time to have a baby. But did you know that your diet can affect your chances of becoming pregnant? Balanced, healthy eating is not only important for your wellbeing, it can also help to promote conception.

Ideally, you should start to improve your eating habits and lifestyle about three or four months before you begin trying to conceive. And for optimum fertility, make sure your daily diet includes some of the following foods ...

## soy and linseed bread



This low-glycaemic carbohydrate provides longer-lasting energy and a steady release of insulin in the body. This is especially important for women who have polycystic ovary syndrome, as it may have a stabilising effect on their hormones and aid in optimising both ovulation and conception, as well as helping to prevent miscarriage. What's more, it's also a great source of phytoestrogens, fibre and omega-3 fats.

## olive oil



You should add fat to your pre-pregnancy diet, but try to use

mono-unsaturated fats such as olive oil, which is an excellent source of vitamin E. Olive oil is also rich in vitamins A, D and K, which are crucial for normal hormone production and the manufacturing of healthy sperm and ova. Aim for between 30 and 60 grams of fat each day.

## lamb or beef



Protein and iron are both found in lamb and beef. Protein, in particular, is important when it comes to conception as it plays a major role in the formation of a man's semen, and also the functioning of his testes. It is an important nutrient for women, too, as it helps in maintaining healthy hormones.





## salmon



If you're not a red meat eater, you can still get all the protein and iron necessary to boost your fertility from ocean and cold water fish, such as salmon (trout and herring are good alternatives). Salmon is also high in omega-3 fats, needed for the formation of prostaglandins (present in semen) and also for fully functioning sex glands.

## oysters



Reputedly effective as an aphrodisiac, these little molluscs are also good for fertility. Oysters are rich in zinc, essential for boosting male fertility as it promotes a higher percentage of live and healthy sperm. But a CSIRO study has found that most of us (67 per cent of men and 85 per cent of women) aren't getting the recommended daily intake (12-15mg) of this vital mineral.

## baby spinach



A great natural source of folate. If taken as recommended, folate can reduce the risk of a neural tube defect by 92 per cent and appears to protect against other congenital abnormalities. ▶

## diet booster

Based on a formula scientifically proven to reduce certain birth defects, Elevit is a pregnancy supplement that contains nutrients such as folate, calcium, iron and B-group vitamins. If taken before and in the early stages of pregnancy, such a supplement may be more effective than folate alone in reducing the risk of spina bifida. It could also reduce the risk of defects of the heart, gastro-intestinal tract and limbs, help protect against cleft palate, and reduce the risk of premature birth and low birth weight. It's available from pharmacies.

# fertility meal plan

This seven-day meal plan is designed to get your fertility-boosting diet off to a great start

	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
MONDAY	Strawberry smoothie made with low-fat milk and a small amount (2 tsps) of honey and linseed, sunflower and almond meal (LSA) and 1 tbsp of low-fat yoghurt + 1 slice of wholegrain toast or soy and linseed toast and Vegemite	2 slices of wholegrain bread, with smoked salmon + rocket salad and orange	Homemade pizza using pita bread, tomato paste, low-fat mozzarella, lean protein (eg, cooked chicken breast, preferably free-range), and olives, mushrooms, capsicum, onion and pineapple + green salad with vinaigrette dressing (olive oil and balsamic vinegar or lemon juice)
TUESDAY	Baked beans on 2 slices of wholegrain toast + 1 apple or other fresh fruit	Wholemeal pita bread topped with hummus, shredded lettuce, lean turkey breast and low-fat cheese + cranberry spread + 1 low-fat yoghurt + 1 pear or other fresh fruit	3 lean lamb cutlets seasoned with thyme and garlic + warm salad of 1/2 cup of spinach or broccoli, cauliflower and carrots with a small amount of olive oil and lemon dressing + 1 baked potato in its jacket
WEDNESDAY	2 slices of wholegrain toast + 2 slices of low-fat cheese and sliced tomato + fresh fruit (compote of pineapple and peaches)	2-4 Ryvita biscuits + 1 small can of tuna with chopped onion and low-fat mayonnaise + 1 cup of Greek salad (including 1 tsp of olive oil and 2-4 cubes of low-fat fetta) + 1 apple	200g lean steak, barbecued with 1-2 cups of salad vegetables with balsamic vinegar + mushrooms cooked in 2 tsps of canola oil + 1 tbsp mustard or barbecue sauce for steak + 1 low-fat yoghurt
THURSDAY	1 serve of porridge with low-fat milk, small serve of honey and 2 tsps of LSA + 150g serve of tinned fruit – peaches in natural juice, drained	Toasted wholegrain sandwich with 150g of leg ham off the bone and mustard + salad + 1 snack pack – pears in natural juice	Thai lamb salad: cook 250g lean lamb fillet on barbecue or grill until brown, with small amount of canola oil. Cool, then slice. Combine red onion, bean sprouts, coriander leaves and mint leaves with some thinly sliced cucumber, a little chilli, cherry tomatoes (quantities as you desire) with lamb, and drizzle with a dressing of garlic, finely chopped lemongrass, lime juice and small amounts of fish sauce and soy sauce (2 tsps)
FRIDAY	3/4 cup of wholegrain cereal with low-fat milk (250ml) + 150g serve of tinned fruit – pears in natural juice, drained	2-egg omelette with spinach, red capsicum and field mushrooms, served with a garden salad	Fillet of salmon (150g), grilled, baked or lightly pan-fried in 2-3 tsps of olive oil, served on a bed of stir-fried vegetables. For vegetables, in wok or frypan, combine capsicums (green or red), spring onion, broccoli or broccolini, snow peas and brussel sprouts in small amount of sesame oil, touch of crushed garlic, grated ginger, and black bean sauce (from supermarket) + side serve of 3/4 cup steamed basmati rice
SATURDAY	2 slices of wholegrain toast with 2 poached eggs and cracked pepper + 1 small glass apple juice (200ml)	2 slices of wholegrain bread with a serve of lean steak with onion, lettuce, tomato and sliced beetroot + 1 low-fat yoghurt	Grilled skinless chicken (200g), served with 1 cup assorted vegetables (eg, broccoli, zucchini, carrot and onion), cooked in tomato puree with basil and garlic and 2 tsps olive oil + side dish of 1 cup mashed sweet potato
SUNDAY	2 slices of low-fat cheese and tomato grilled on 2 slices of wholegrain toast + 1 banana or other fresh fruit	Lentil soup or minestrone soup with 1 slice of fresh sourdough bread, cut thick, with low-fat cream cheese	Spaghetti bolognese (250g lean red mince and 1 cup cooked pasta per individual serve) + garden salad with small amount of vinaigrette

# fertility & do's & don'ts

- Eat a variety of carbohydrates, including ones that have a low glycaemic index and those that contain phytoestrogens (soya products).
- Include foods rich in calcium and zinc such as wholegrain breads and cereals, lean meat and fish with bones, such as salmon.
- Include folate-rich foods such as cereals, wholegrain breads, green leafy vegetables and even Vegemite.
- Include fresh fruits and vegetables to provide a good source of anti-oxidants.
- Include iron-rich foods, such as lean red meats. To boost the absorption of iron, add foods that contain vitamin C, such as capsicum and broccoli.
- Stay in your healthy weight range.
- Avoid caffeine (cola, tea and coffee).
- Avoid tannins (tea, coffee, herbal tea, cola drinks and red wine).
- Avoid high-fat foods (particularly hidden saturated fats in commercially prepared foods or takeaways).
- Avoid refined carbohydrates, including high-sugar foods.
- Avoid excess amounts of alcohol.
- Avoid excess vitamin A.