

# Conceive and Deliver a Truly Healthy Baby

## Improving Fertility and Creating Optimal Health

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With infertility rates in the Western world increasing sharply in recent years, the primary focus of most parents today is simply to conceive. Unfortunately however, mirroring the rise in infertility are increasing rates of miscarriage, premature birth, birth defects, low birth weight, learning disabilities and a multitude of other health issues.

These are the most current statistics:

- 1 couple in 6 is infertile
- 1 woman in 3 will suffer a miscarriage
- 1 baby in 10 is born prematurely
- 1 baby in 30 is born with a congenital abnormality
- 1 baby in 15 is low birth-weight
- 1 woman in 3 has a Caesarean section (rates are much higher in some hospitals)
- 1 woman in 6 suffers from some degree of post-natal depression

Acknowledging that these statistics are of great concern, we now know that conceiving should not be the primary issue, but rather optimizing the health of both the father and mother-to-be to ensure the healthiest possible eggs and sperm and the optimal physical environment in the woman so that she can nurture and carry a perfectly healthy baby to full term.

With this change in priorities, so too must our focus switch from efforts aimed purely at conception. IVF (In-Vitro Fertilization), Clomid and even acupuncture treatments must be pushed back until we have ensured the preconception health of both prospective parents, using strategies to ensure that optimal health is achieved well before any attempts to conceive are made. In fact this approach is the current focus of some of the top research groups in the world, geneticists, healthcare companies and many educators like myself. We have found that these preconception health measures not only result in a striking reduction in compromised reproductive outcomes, but ensure an optimally healthy baby who will enjoy improved health for all of his or her life.

The UK-based Foresight Association for the Promotion of Preconceptual Care, established in 1978, and for which I am the spokesperson in Australasia, has played a major role in defining and promoting the benefits of preconception health care. Their work has been truly ground-breaking - identifying the cocktail of poor diet, lifestyle and toxic environmental factors that can lead to infertility and fetal health issues. Two studies conducted by Foresight, the results of which were published in the Journal of Nutritional and Environmental Medicine in 1994, highlight the benefits of this approach to pregnancy. 367 couples in the first study and 1076 couples in the second study were assessed over 2 years:

Miscarriage Rate:	0% and 3.5% compared with the normal population rate of 25%
Malformation Rate:	0% and 0.47% compared with the normal population rate of 6%
Stillbirth Rate:	0% and 0.38% compared with the normal population rate of 1.37%
Conception Rate:	89% and 81%

What made these results even more impressive was that in the initial study 37% of women had tried unsuccessfully to conceive for between 1-10 years, 38% had experienced a miscarriage, 3% a still birth and 2% malformation, meaning that prior to conducting preconception health they were considerably worse than the population average.

The absence of premature and very low birth weight babies when couples practice preconception healthcare is another significant factor in light of Professor David Barker's findings. David Barker, Professor of Clinical Epidemiology at the

University of Southampton's Developmental Origins of Health and Disease research center and Professor in the Department of Medicine at Oregon Health and Science University was awarded a CBE in the 2006 UK New Year's Honors list, recognizing his pioneering medical research work linking low birth weight and the later development of disease.

Barker puts it very simply: *'Preventing heart disease and Type 2 diabetes needs to begin before a baby is even conceived. Research has found low birth-weight babies to be at increased risk of heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, high blood pressure and osteoporosis.'*

In April 2006, the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, released health guidelines for all women who could fall pregnant, even those who had no plans to become a parent. Associate Director for the development of the program said: *'If you want to prevent any damage to the baby while the fetal organs are being formed, you need to take action before that time. We want couples to consciously think about being ready for pregnancy before pregnancy happens. Improving preconception health will require changes in the knowledge and attitudes and behaviors of persons, families, communities, and institutions (e.g., government and health-care settings). The purpose of preconception care is to improve the health of each woman before any pregnancy and thereby affect the future health of the woman, her child, and her family.'*

Nutritional, environmental, emotional and lifestyle factors must be taken into consideration. However, importantly, research has shown that it's not just about the mother-to-be paying attention to these issues, as many have previously recommended. Every aspect of compromised reproduction, from infertility and miscarriage to physical and mental health issues in the child can be linked to the health of the father and his sperm. Some researchers actually attribute more than 50 percent of reproductive issues to poor sperm health, linking damage to toxins during the critical four month period of sperm formation. Some of those identified toxins include agricultural chemicals, household chemicals, solvents and heavy metals used in manufacturing industries, building and painting, while military personnel are now often exposed to a very potent chemical cocktail.

***'Ensuring both partners are equally involved in the preconception preparations is the key to providing their future child with every possible advantage.'***

The previously cited statistics confirm exactly why this holistic approach to preparation for pregnancy is so important with metabolic, immune, neurological and digestive (MIND) disorders at epidemic levels and rising and representing a very inauspicious start for the next generation and their families. Reversing this overall trend is critical, not just from the very personal human cost of our health, but the potential huge savings for the healthcare system.

So as couples planning pregnancy become increasingly aware of the part they must play in creating the optimal environment for truly healthy eggs and sperm and for the subsequent development of an optimally healthy baby, they must look at their nutritional intake, their environment and their lifestyle, as well as products that best support their own efforts to address their core or foundation health. While many understand the basics of whole food nutrition, healthy lifestyle, clean environment and regular exercise, all of which are outlined in my books and in my new webinar program, many are unaware of the products that support the endocrine system and its optimal function. As I say to many of my patients *'there's no point putting fuel in your car if your engine isn't tuned!'*

Foundation health covers factors such as hormone balance, immune competence, neurotransmitter production, fat and energy metabolism, healthy gut microbiome and more and in order to address all of these issues I start with supporting the Hypothalamus Pituitary Adrenal Axis (HPA Axis). There has been much research conducted on herbal and nutritional supplements that support the adrenal glands, but there is very limited research on natural products that demonstrate a true impact on the whole HPA Axis. More recently, research has found that an herb called maca (*Lepidium Peruvianum*), can impact the HPA Axis. Interestingly however, it has been found that there are in fact 13 different phenotypes of maca. These phenotypes exhibit different colors, have different DNA, different analytical profiles and most importantly impact different systems or organs in the body. The standard maca, found as a powder on the shelf is a combination of all the different types mixed together, generally in the ratios in which each color grows. This standard combination has been seen to support the adrenals, making many people feel better and have more energy but research has shown that none of these maca powders fully impact the whole HPA Axis.

Even more interesting, this research has shown that specific types of maca, have distinct effects on separate aspects of fertility. For example black maca has been shown to improve sperm production and sperm motility, while in female animal studies, yellow maca has demonstrated benefits in optimizing litter numbers and uterine weight, while maintaining healthy birth weights. In addition specific combinations of various phenotypes in higher concentrations have resulted in optimizing hormone balance in both older women and women with irregular cycles or in those suffering from conditions such as Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS). This is important because many health practitioners see standard maca powders make PCOS worse, while the correct phenotype combination can actually improve the condition. Hormone balance is the foundation around which fertility and overall health is based, with hormone imbalance one of the common causes of miscarriage and other compromised reproductive outcomes. This is why establishing hormone balance long before conception is so important.

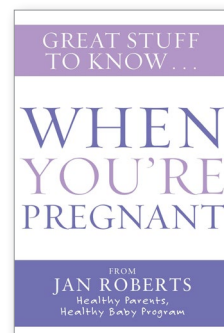
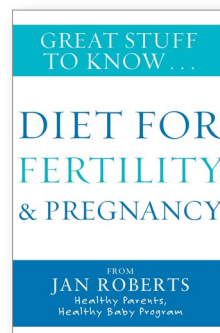
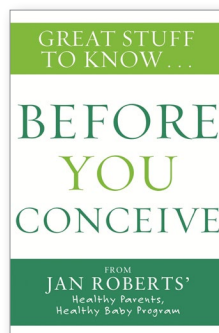
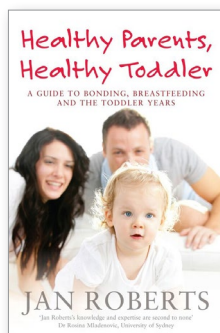
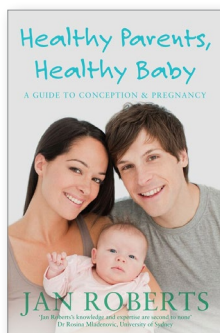
One company leading the way in this research is Natural Health International (NHI). NHI has been researching maca for over sixteen years and is the global leader in research on maca and women's health. During this time NHI have developed three specific phenotype combinations for women at each stage of life and two for men. NHI's double-blind placebo-controlled clinical trials on their proprietary product Maca-GO® - commercially known as Femmenessence, published in the *International Journal of Biomedical Science*, were the first, and currently the only ones to demonstrate statistically significant effects on hormone levels in peri and post-menopausal women. Their continued research resulted in the development of a product specifically for younger women called Femmenessence MacaHarmony® to optimally balance hormones as well as support fertility and enhanced gastro-intestinal absorption of iron and other key vitamins and minerals. Research on men resulted in the formulation of another product - Maca-OG™ (commercially known as Revolution Macalibrium®) to benefit sperm production, mobility and quality while also enhancing sexual function, libido and optimal hormone health.

Another key area that I always address in couples preparing for pregnancy is gut health. Researchers from prestigious institutions that include Harvard Medical School and Yale University School of Medicine now confirm the absolute and fundamental importance of establishing healthy gut microbiome, which consist of 99 percent bacteria. 'Important' isn't really strong enough to describe all the things for which this colony of microorganisms is responsible. Those factors include integrity of gut lining, nutrient absorption and vitamin synthesis, immune function, energy metabolism, hormone production and balance and neurotransmitter formation.

The final, critical system that needs support in the lead-up to conception is the body's detoxification processes. The approach to reducing toxicity must be two-fold. It requires the individual to reduce their exposure to any potential lifestyle or environmental toxicity wherever possible. In addition, they need the very best product to help the body deal with its own metabolic by-products and any toxic exposure that is unavoidable. NHI's pH Quintessence is my product of choice. pH Quintessence is a 40:1 concentrate of a specific variety of alfalfa making it one of the most highly concentrated greens products in the market place. pH Quintessence supports every phase of detoxification making it ideal for use by both prospective parents before they start trying to conceive.

Thus the combination of a finely tuned HPA Axis to balance hormones and normalise cycle length, optimal sperm production, a healthy gut, robust nutritional supplementation and fully-functioning detoxification system are my key recommendations for preconception health. Ensuring that both partners are in excellent health before conception can ensure optimal fertility, reduced rate of miscarriage, uncomplicated, full-term pregnancy, short, straightforward labor, good bonding/no post-natal depression, successful breastfeeding relationship, and an exceptionally healthy happy baby!

**For more details: Healthy Parents, Healthy Baby – Your Guide to Conception and Pregnancy (book or ebook) and 5-Point Better Babies Webinar Series [www.healthhqglobal.com](http://www.healthhqglobal.com)**





**Jan Roberts** has spent fifty years in the healthcare industry. For more than thirty years she has provided information for prospective Moms and Dads. Jan is the author of six best-selling books and ebooks and three mini ebooks. She has made hundreds of presentations to professionals and prospective parents around the world. She believes that this important information must be widely available and engaging, when baby-making is still in the future. Both prospective parents, working together, can ensure that their future children will reach their full genetic potential! But it doesn't stop with conception - Jan is also a staunch advocate of the healthiest possible choices during pregnancy and breastfeeding, as well as the nurturing parenting practices that foster a child's emotional health, build self-esteem and promote the wellbeing of the whole family.

## **SUMMARY: BEFORE YOU CONCEIVE**

The preconception work-up applies in equal measure to both partners and should be completed, with all health-promoting measures in place, at least four months prior to conception. Give yourself as much time as you need to prepare, but make sure that both of you have the healthiest possible diet, lifestyle and environment during that critical 4-month period.

**Support** your foundation health and HPA Axis with Femmenessence MacaHarmony for her and Revolution Macalibrium for him. This will support hormone balance, normalize cycle length, boost sperm production and overall, enhance fertility of both partners.

**Ensure** optimal gut health with a potent probiotic and optimize your nutrition - an adequate supply of all the vitamins, minerals, essential amino and fatty acids are necessary for proper fertility and for the whole reproductive cycle to proceed smoothly. Improve your diet and take a balanced combination of nutritional supplements. Single nutrients are never recommended, but special attention should be paid to optimizing two key nutrients. Monitor and maintain zinc status (zinc levels may be low after use of hormonal contraception) and check and supplement (or get appropriate sun exposure) to ensure adequate vitamin D levels.

**Detoxify** - 8 glasses of purified water every day is a good way to start on a detoxification program. Add Original Himalayan Crystal Salt Sole to support detoxification, increase hydration and ensure an alkaline pH. Undertake a full, health professional-supported, detox at the beginning of this process.

**Avoid** completely any of the common social poisons such as cigarettes, alcohol, caffeine and other drugs (including oral contraceptives) in the critical 4-month period.

**Avoid** environmental toxicity - reduce your use of chemical-laden products (check what's in your skincare products) and limit your exposure to electromagnetic radiation (mobile phones, laptops, notepads, tablets, out of pockets and off laps).

**Eat** organically grown, fresh vegetables and fruit that are in season. To boost your greens intake look at a highly concentrated green supplement. My favorite and the highest concentration I have found so you only need to take 3 capsules a day is pH Quintessence which is a 40:1 concentration of Non-GMO alfalfa.

**Establish** a regular exercise routine - both aerobic conditioning and strength training are important. If you're overweight, reducing your Body Mass Index by just a few points can increase your potential for conception by 15%.

**Reduce** stress and maintain a positive attitude - you can make a significant difference to the health of the next generation!

**Consult** a health professional if either of you suffer from chronic or existing conditions such as infection, allergy, hormone imbalance, if you are exposed to environmental toxicity or if you have a prior reproductive problem.