



# Expectful Complete Guide to A Happy and Healthy Fertility Journey



## Ready To Make A Baby, Now What?

Making a conscious decision to begin preparing to have a baby can be both exciting and overwhelming. Depending on if you are just getting started or have been down this path for some time, you may be uncertain around what you can do to increase your ability to get pregnant.

At Expectful, we've spent a tremendous amount of time speaking with preparing to conceive (PTC ) women and experts in fertility to learn about what it means to be emotionally and physically healthy when you're trying to get pregnant and what tools can help you get there.

Before you dive in, we want to let you in on a little secret: you are your best guide when it comes to what's "right" or "not right" during your journey.

Overall, listen to your instincts, your body, and your mind. They already know what's best for you.

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## Exercise.

*“Life is like a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.” -Albert Einstein*

There's no doubt that regular exercise is important for fertility, but before you create a new workout schedule or increase your current one, it's important to know that there's a fine balance when it comes to exercise and getting pregnant.

Research shows that too much exercise or high-intensity workouts can alter hormonal balance, disrupt ovulation and change your entire menstrual cycle. However, studies have also shown that leading a sedentary lifestyle can be bad for fertility as well. The **key word here is moderation**. Exercising consistently and at a moderate level of intensity is the sweet spot for most women when it comes to fertility.

An important thing to remember is that working out when you are preparing to conceive is about making your body healthy enough to carry a baby, not skinny enough to look good in a swimsuit. This can be a big misconception as weight may play a major role in your fertility. A good way to measure what a healthy weight is on your body is find out your BMI. **A normal BMI range (18.5 to 24.9) is associated with optimal reproductive function.**

Research shows that 12 percent of infertility cases may result from being under that range and 25 percent from being over it says Robert Brzyski, MD, PhD, professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. “The two extremes tax the body in ways that disturb hormone production and ovulation” explains Dr. Brzyski.

## What exercises are safe / not safe?

First things first, if you have concerns about how your exercise routine is affecting your fertility, discuss it with your doctor. The role exercise plays during this time is very individualized. What's healthy for one woman could be unhealthy for another, so have a conversation with your physician to find out best practices for you. In the meantime, below is an overview on how you can use certain exercises as optimally as possible.

### If you're a runner:

The benefits of running seem endless. It can make you happier and healthier, reduce stress and boost confidence, and to help you lose weight and even prevent certain diseases. Running is also a great cardiovascular activity, and it's great for strengthening your heart. However, running too much, training for a marathon or working on a five-minute mile could put strain on your body and menstrual cycle. A good way to gauge if your running routine is benefiting you or not is to notice how you feel during and after a run. Are you extremely winded, achy or fatigued? Has your menstrual cycle become erratic? These could be signs that it's time to tone down on how much you run, the pace in which you run and how long your runs are. Moderate and leisure runs should keep you fit without jeopardizing your pregnancy plans.

### If you love to hit the weights:

Weight lifting helps to keep your muscles strong, improves your posture and helps keep your body in balance. Having stronger muscles makes everyday activities like carrying groceries, moving furniture, and picking up objects easier and safer for your body. It also prepares your body for carrying a baby and lifting strollers, which is important to consider during this time. But, like any other form of exercise before pregnancy, pushing your body to the limit can interfere with your menstrual cycle. So instead of lifting heavy weights to buff up, lift lighter weights and concentrate more on building lean muscle. Another alternative is to use your bodyweight for resistance. This could be holding planks, doing push-ups, lunges or squats. Just keep reminding yourself not to overdo it.

## If yoga is your jam:

Yoga is a fantastic form of exercise because it increases your balance, builds strength and is good for endurance. It also incorporates relaxation which can be very helpful for conception. But not all yoga is created equal. Some styles may be too intense for women who are trying to get pregnant. Consider taking classes that are a good balance of standing postures / flow and winding down time. If you happen to like hot yoga (yoga in a room that's heated to between 95 and 105 degrees) you may want to consult your doctor before continuing. Some of the concerns that come up here are that practicing hot yoga can leave you dizzy and dehydrated and could interfere with your cycle. Another thing to keep in mind is that exercising in an overly hot room isn't safe for a brand-new developing fetus because they can't regulate their temperature. Again speak to your doctor and find out a yoga style that will work best for you.

## If pilates is your thing:

Pilates is extremely beneficial during this time because it helps you to build a strong core now, creating a solid foundation for a baby to grow. Pilates strengthens your abdominal muscles helping to support your back, hips and spine. Pilates also strengthens your pelvic floor which is crucial for a healthy pregnancy, delivery and recovery and increases your circulation. It's important to be aware of how you feel while doing this exercise, making sure that it's helping you to feel energized rather than beaten down.

## If you're a swimmer or a cyclist:

Both of these exercises are great because they are low impact, build muscle tone and have cardiovascular benefits. Swimming in particular can be very healing physically and mentally for women who are going through intense fertility treatments and struggling with body image. But just as runners shouldn't be training for marathons pre-pregnancy, cyclist and swimmers shouldn't be training for triathlons. The large amounts of exercise that come with training can wreck havoc on your body and interfere with your cycles. It's ok for these exercises to feel challenging, but they shouldn't leave you exhausted or gasping for breath.

Once you get the okay from your doctor continue or start the exercise of your choice, make sure to listen to your body, prioritize relaxation just as much as movement and stay hydrated.

## A note for your partner

It's important to remember that although your body plays a big role in conception, your partner's physical fitness can make a difference as well. Men who do any form of exercise at a highly intensity level may risk a decrease in their sperm count. So, it's important to talk to your partner about his workouts when you are preparing to make a baby.

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## Nutrition.

*"Your body is a temple, but only if you treat it as one." Astrid Alauda*

There's no doubt that food and fertility are linked. In a [study done by Harvard](#), it was found that unlike other uncontrollable factors like age and genetics, eating certain foods and avoiding others is something you can do for yourself to increase your chances of getting pregnant. The study took place over eight years, and followed 17,544 married nurses who were trying to get pregnant and had no previous history of infertility. What they discovered is that by changing five or more aspects of their diet (and exercise) habits, women with irregular or absent ovulation, which is responsible for 18 to 30 percent of infertility cases, reduced their risk of infertility by 80 percent.

Whether you are planning on being pregnant right now, a few months from now or even a year out, it's important to start nourishing your body with a balanced diet.

## What should I eat?

Eating when you are preparing to conceive is all about supporting your body in its reproductive efforts. You want to eat foods that are nutrient dense, help with hormonal function and balance, support egg health, sperm health and blood health. One key factor is eating organic whenever possible because

herbicides and pesticides have been shown to negatively affect both male and female fertility. (1)

## Let's break down foods that increase fertility.

### Avocados

Avocados are rich in Omega 9, a monounsaturated good fat necessary for healthy egg and sperm development, vitamin C a powerful antioxidant which protects sperm from oxidative damage, B6 required for optimal hormone production and regulation, folate the key nutrient for healthy pregnancy, vitamin K one for the key fat soluble vitamins required for proper blood clotting, fibre, potassium and many other beneficial phytonutrients.

### Yams

Yams may have an ovulation stimulating substance that can help boost fertility. Yams contain phytoestrogens and a form of natural progesterone (dioscin) which can help regulate the estrogen progesterone balance. This is very helpful for women who suffer from endometriosis and fibroids which are both major infertility problems, because they are linked to estrogen dominance.

### Salmon

Salmon is jam packed with Omega-3 Fatty Acids which are proven to regulate blood flow to reproductive organs. These fatty acids aid in the production of hormones, reduce inflammation, and help regulate the menstrual cycle. Fish is also a great source of protein and vitamin A. When possible, choose wild salmon over farm. Farmed salmon could contain antibiotics and toxic food dyes.

### Figs

The ancient Greeks believed that figs increased fertility and now science is backing them up. Figs are packed with vitamins and minerals, and are rich in calcium and fiber which is necessary for cleaning up excess estrogen and xenoestrogens from our digestive system before they get a chance to be absorbed. They also contain a lot of iron which is important for healthy eggs and ovulation.

## Dark leafy Greens

Dark leafy vegetables are packed with minerals, antioxidants and vitamins essential to healthy fertility. Greens such as spinach, romaine, arugula and broccoli are high in folate, a B vitamin that has been proven to improve ovulation. Leafy greens are also naturally increase a woman's libido.

## Bananas

Bananas are one of the best foods when it comes to increasing your fertility. They are packed with vitamin B6, which regulates the hormones and is needed for good egg and sperm development. They are also a good source of Vitamin C, Potassium, Dietary Fiber, Protein, Magnesium, Folate, Riboflavin, Niacin, vitamin A and iron.

## Beans

Beans are lean protein, that have high levels of folate acid and iron which helps to increase libido. Beans such as lentils, garbanzo, black, and pinto beans are great sources. Lentils in particular are the second highest source of iron of all foods and the second highest source of folic acid so incorporating more lentils into your diet is a sure fire way to boost your nutrition.

## Grass-fed meats

Grass-fed meats are high in Omega-3, iron, B12 and protein. Grass-fed meat has less fat and provides a lot more nutrients because the animals eat a natural diet and are raised without antibiotics and hormones.

## Full fat dairy

In the Harvard study, it was found that the more low-fat dairy products in a woman's diet, the more trouble she had conceiving. The more full-fat dairy products she ate, the less likely she was to have difficulty getting pregnant. (2)

## Whole grains

Whole grains are filled with fiber, important vitamins, and immune supporting properties. Fiber helps the body to get rid of excess hormones and keeps your blood sugar balanced. It's best to avoid processed and refined white

foods and grains because the nutrients are stripped during the refining process. Choose whole wheat bread and pasta, unless you are gluten free which means you would want to consume breads without wheat, rye or barley. Eating brown rice and quinoa is a great source of whole grains as well.

## Ok, Now Let's Talk Vitamins & Minerals

There are **six superstar nutrients** that have been shown to increase your chances of getting pregnant. Listed below are the nutrients, why they are important and in what foods you can find them. By incorporating the foods below into your diet based off of your individual nutrition needs and taking into consideration eating foods with a variety of colors, you are creating an even better environment for a baby to grow. Please always do consult your doctor to see which nutrients are best for your individual needs.

### Zinc

#### Why is this important?

Zinc is important for both female and male fertility. In women, zinc keeps your reproductive system functioning well and it helps to keep your estrogen and progesterone levels in balance. In men, zinc is extremely important because it's been found to boost sperm levels.

#### What foods have it?

Oysters, turkey, beans, oatmeal, nuts, cheese, eggs, pumpkin and sesame seeds, yogurt, green peas, and shrimp.

### Folic acid

#### Why is this important?

According to research, **women who take folic acid everyday are more likely to get pregnant**. Not enough folic acid has been linked to a greater chance of miscarriage or stillbirth.

#### What foods have it?

Dark leafy greens, broccoli, asparagus, pinto beans, garbanzo beans, citrus fruits, beans, peas, lentils, avocado, okra, brussel sprouts, seeds, nuts, cauliflower, beets, corn, carrots, squash.

## Iron

### Why is this important?

Lack of iron has been associated with lack of ovulation (3). Iron helps to build blood and create red blood cells, which helps to balance your ovulation and increase your chances of getting pregnant.

### What foods have it?

Iron can be difficult to get from diet alone so speak to your care provider about supplements. High iron foods include: spinach, oatmeal, beef, blackstrap molasses, prune juice, dried fruit, potatoes, tofu, white beans, and pumpkin seeds.

## Coenzyme Q10

### Why is this important?

Coenzyme Q10, also known as CoQ10 is found in every cell of the body and is responsible for generating energy in our cells. It is an important antioxidant that decreases the damaging effects that free radicals can have on the reproductive system and it may support egg health. It's especially important for male fertility because studies show it increases sperm motility in semen.

### What foods have it?

Organ meats, beef, sardines, mackerel, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, peanuts and soybeans.

## Vitamin D

### Why is this important?

Vitamin D is needed to help the body create sex hormones which then effect ovulation and hormone balance. Research has also showed that women who have adequate vitamin D intake are more likely to become pregnant.

### What foods have it?

Calf liver, sardines, mackerel, salmon, tuna, eggs, mushrooms, cheese, oranges, milk, almond milk, tofu, oatmeal.

## L -Arginine

### Why is this important?

L - Arginine increases blood circulation to the reproductive organs in both men and women. It's also been found to increase sperm production and increase libido.

### What foods have it?

Turkey, pork loin, chicken, pumpkin seeds, peanuts, spirulina, lentils, kidney beans, fresh soybeans, egg yolk and dairy.

## What shouldn't I eat while preparing to get pregnant?

It's never easy to completely take certain foods out of your diet but when it comes to conceiving, there are foods that could decrease your chances of getting pregnant. Below is a list of recommended foods to avoid when preparing to conceive.

## Avoid Sugar

We know, we said the last thing you wanted to hear first, but there's a good reason for it. When we consume sugar, our bodies need to release insulin in order to bring down our blood sugar. Insulin is a hormone and when it's constantly flooding your system, rising and falling, it brings all of the other hormones in your body along for the ride as well. If one hormone cannot be regulated, the others - like the sex hormones you are working so hard to get into balance, can no longer perform or regulate either. If / when you can, skip on the sugar or look for foods that have a lower glycemic index like maple syrup instead of granulated sugar.

## Avoid Caffeine

We know how much you might love your morning coffee, but studies show that women who drank one to one and a half cups of coffee a day had up to a 50% reduction in fertility (4). This could be linked to the fact that caffeine is

converted into urine within your liver and your liver has to also deal with excreting all of your hormones. If the liver is overworked, it can't function properly which takes a toll on your hormones. This is also something to think about now since during pregnancy only one 12oz cup of coffee is recommended each day due to links with caffeine consumptions and miscarriage (5). Look for alternatives that work for you, perhaps hot tea with lemon or a non caffeinated hot tea.

## Avoid Alcohol

Research shows that women who consume 5 drinks or less alcoholic drinks per week each had lowered fertility (6). This could be because alcohol depresses the adrenal glands and slows down the release of hormones that the glands produce, which could impair egg health and libido. Drinking alcohol regularly has also been linked to men having lower sperm motility and concentration.

## Avoid Soy

Soy has been shown to have estrogen mimicking properties which can have a negative impact on your hormonal balance. Soy also contains phytic acid which prevents nutrients from being absorbed and may bind to nutrients like zinc and carry it out of the body. It's been linked to low sperm concentration in men and because a large amount of the soy grown in the U.S. is genetically modified (GMO ) it could also decrease fertility.

## Avoid GMO Foods

Genetically modified foods (GMO for short) have been linked to toxic and allergic reactions, sick, sterile and dead livestock. They also been found to damage virtually every organ studied in lab animals. GMOs are banned in Europe and elsewhere but still allowed to be used in the United States. GMOs according to researchers are becoming a real issue when it comes to fertility. The Austrian Health Ministers conducted research that indicated that fertility rates have suffered dramatically due to GMO exposure and those who regularly ingest GMO foods were more likely to get sick, age faster and have a difficult time getting and or staying pregnant (7).

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Emotional.

*“You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.” ~ Jon Kabat-Zinn*

The emotions you encounter when preparing to conceive can feel like a roller coaster at times. **In fact, research has actually shown that women who are experiencing infertility have the same levels of anxiety and depression as do women with cancer, heart disease and HIV. (8)**

If you think about this, it makes complete sense for two reasons: One is that procreation is a strong instinct for most humans and when we are having difficulty doing so, it can take an emotional toll on us. Two is that the emotions you experience when preparing to conceive are repeated on a monthly cycle. You go through waves of hope, fear, anticipation, stress, worry, anxiety, anger and sadness and then next month you go through that same wave. These constant fluctuations can be overwhelming and leave you feeling defeated.

## What’s the link between stress and infertility?

Stress affects the functioning of your hypothalamus - a gland in your brain that works with the pituitary gland when it comes to regulating the hormones that tell your ovaries to release eggs. This can impact your ovulation and disrupt your cycle. **In a study at the University of California San Diego that tracked women who were undergoing IVF found women with high amounts of stress were the least successful when it came to the retrieving and implantation of eggs compared to women with little stress.**

## How meditation can help.

Emotional well-being during fertility is Expectful’s top priority because we believe it’s the most neglected. We call meditation “the prenatal vitamin for the mind” because of all the science that shows it can help benefit both you and your future baby’s health and wellbeing. It can also support you across the spectrum of emotions that come up during this time including stress which has been directly linked to infertility. It’s a great tool for getting better sleep, for handling anxiety around the two week wait, and for trusting yourself and your body throughout this journey.

## The Science Behind Meditation & Fertility

## Balanced Hormones

According to fertility specialist Dr. Robert Greene, nothing has a greater impact on fertility than hormone balance (9). Meditation influences important hormone centers in the brain, which can promote hormone balance to help you conceive (10).

## Reduced Stress

Numerous studies have shown that stress is linked to reduced fertility in both males and females (11). In one study of 291 women undergoing IVF treatment, it was found that anxiety and depression also negatively affected fertility (12). Meditating regularly is known to benefit your psychological health and stress management skills, allowing you to maximize your ability to conceive (13).

## Stronger Relationships

Mindfulness practices enhance emotional regulation, patience, as well as self-kindness (14). These qualities can help maintain and strengthen relationships with your loved ones, and provide a warm and loving environment for your baby.

## Increased Compassion

Meditation is known to be associated with increased compassion (15). This serves as an effective tool for managing social anxiety, marital conflicts, anger, and other negative situations.

A regular meditation practice can help you navigate difficult moments with more self-compassion and be more present during the enjoyable ones.

To get more information on Expectful and the science behind meditation, [click here](#).

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## Relationships.

*“It is an absolute human certainty that no one can know his own beauty or perceive a sense of his own worth until it has been reflected back to him in the mirror of another loving, caring human being.” John Joseph Powell*

Preparing to conceive is an exciting time for you and your partner, but it can also be challenging. In a study conducted over 12 years by Danish researchers, it was found that couples who didn't have a baby after fertility treatments were more likely to separate. Although this research was done over many years, it does suggest that there's a tremendous amount of strain that can be put on a couple when trying to make a baby.

## What are the relationship challenges and how do you work through them?

There are many factors that come into play for couples when they are trying to get pregnant. Below we've broken down the most common challenges and how you can work with your partner to keep your relationship strong.

### Identify each other's coping styles.

Coping with emotions is a very individualized process - meaning that the way you experience and release emotions is most likely different than how your partner does. Where you might find relief in talking through your emotions, your partner might find comfort in processing alone and in silence.

Identifying each other's coping styles can be an amazing tool throughout this journey and beyond. When you understand how your partner handles difficult emotions you can not only support them more effectively, but they can begin to comfort you better as well. Set time aside to discuss what you can do to help one another feel more supported. Although this might bring up feelings of vulnerability at first, it's important to let your partner in so they can truly see what you are experiencing and how they can nurture you through it.

Doing this will create space for a bigger conversation about how you can best serve each other's needs while also honoring your own means of healing. This can help to keep feelings of resentment from coming to the surface down the line.

## Set aside time for non baby-making sex.

It's normal for sex to feel more routine and less spontaneous when you're trying to get pregnant. Before trying to have a baby, the goal of sex was most likely for pleasure and enjoyment. However, with your goal changing to creating a baby, it's natural that the feelings around sex would change as well. Sex becomes more of a means to a goal (making a baby), a goal that isn't always easy to hit. The repetitions of failed conceptions can bring up feelings of anger, rejection, sadness and even avoidance of wanting to have sex altogether.

It's because of this that it's important to set up times where sex isn't about making a baby. Creating time for you and your partner to simply enjoy each other can renew your passion and love for one another. We know that this may seem easier said than done because it's difficult to not look at every time you have sex as an opportunity to get what you inevitably hope for - that positive pregnancy test. But it's also vital that you realize that there's a person in front of you today that needs care and love. Taking this time to support and be supported will make you a stronger and more compassionate couple in and out of the bedroom.

## Recognize you are a team.

Throughout this process, it can feel like all the weight and pressure falls onto the woman's shoulders. But, as we mentioned above, it's important to not forget the person standing in front of you throughout this process. Often times women will take on the full load of trying to get pregnant, including doctors visits, changes in healthy habits and any other tools they can get their hands on. This can lead to feelings of isolation, stress, and pressure.

Realize that you are a team. Allow your partner to join in on the entire process, inviting him / her to come with you to doctor's visits so you can make decisions together and be educated on the various things you can do as a couple or individually to make your fertility journey smoother. Knowing that you have each others back can help to avoid finger-pointing when things get rough.

## Prioritize your relationship.

During the fertility journey it's normal to want to revolve everything around getting pregnant but this can take a lot of focus away from your relationship as a whole. Just as too much time spent on work can put a strain on couples, too much focus on making a baby can as well. Take a moment to remember why you chose to do this together and what you mean to one another.

Making your relationship number one will help to increase feelings of intimacy, support and enjoyment. Funny enough that all of those things help for making a baby as well. When we make decisions that gear towards creating a thriving relationship, we make space for so much more. Schedule nights out, weekend adventures or anything else that lights you up as a couple. Don't lose sight of each other throughout this journey especially at time when you need one another more than ever.

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When we acknowledge and understand that these common relationship problems exist, we can help to see them before they occur or work through them when they do arise. As in any time throughout life, communication is key in a relationship. If you're finding it challenging to talk through things, reach out to a friend who's been through this, or a counselor or therapist that can offer guidance.

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## Community.

*"Home is a safe place, a place where one is free from attack, a place where one experiences secure relationships and affirmation. It's a place where people share and understand each other. Its relationships are nurturing. The people in it do not need to be perfect; instead, they need to be honest, loving, supportive, recognizing a common humanity that makes all of us vulnerable."*

*—Gladys M. Hunt*

Fertility can be one of the most isolating times in a woman's life. "Having difficulty getting pregnant can cause as much grief as losing a loved one," says Linda D. Applegarth, Ed.D., director of psychological services at the Perelman Cohen Center. "But it's different. It is chronic and elusive," she adds. "There's a fear that life will be eternally empty. " It's because of this that many women struggle in silence and tend to believe there is something wrong with them if they aren't getting pregnant.

## Why join a community?

Whether you are thinking about getting pregnant, just started preparing, or have been trying for a while, a supportive community can help you understand that you are not alone. Below are three reasons why being in one could change your journey.

### The Power Of Relatability.

There is a tendency to think you are alone in your thoughts, observations and experiences when you are trying to get pregnant. This can lead to self-doubt or feeling like something is wrong with you. When you can communicate with women who are going through the same ups and downs as you, you'll notice that they have the same questions, uncertainties, and insecurities. This not only allows you to feel understood, but it also helps you to step into your own individual power.

### A Safe Space To Learn.

Fertility communities offer a unique space to ask questions openly and without judgment. This will help you to receive honest and kind guidance about any questions you might have. The best part is that there will most likely be women in there with varies backgrounds and experiences within these groups. This gives you the opportunity to learn from women who have been or are going through similar circumstances.

### Compassionate Support.

When a group of women who are preparing to conceive mindfully get together, whether that be in person or online, it is with the intent to help, nurture and care for women within their circle. When you find the right group for you, you will feel uplifted from the compassionate support that surrounds you.

## What groups are out there?

You can definitely search within your local community for support groups in person. Checking in with your local hospital, fertility clinic, therapist or motherhood center would be a great place to start. However, there are also amazing fertility groups right online.

For online support groups, we recommend:

1. [Attain Fertility](#)
2. [Resolve: The National infertility Association](#)
3. [Path2Parenthood](#)

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## Treatment Options.

*“Accepting help is its own kind of strength” - Kiera Cass*

It's common for couples have problems with infertility. Things like age, health issues, stress and lifestyle choices can be contributing factors when it comes to getting pregnant and in some cases certain treatments can help.

## When should I consult my doctor?

In general, it's recommended that women under age 35 try for a year before seeing their doctor, whereas women age 35 and over can seek medical advice after six months of trying without conceiving. However, if you have an irregular period, history with cancer or other conditions like PCOS or endometriosis past or present, it's best to start a conversation early so you can know your options.

## What are my treatment options?

Your healthcare provider will be able to go over which treatment options are best for you based on your individual needs. Below is a brief overview of some of the things that may be able to help.

### Fertility Drugs.

Drugs are usually the first treatment option for women who are having difficulty getting pregnant, and with good reason - millions of couples who use drugs conceive without having to use other interventions. Fertility drugs help by giving your reproductive system an extra boost, whether that's helping you ovulate or improving and balancing your hormones. Depending on what your doctor recommends, these drugs could come in the form of pills or injections.

### Reproductive Surgery.

If you have endometriosis or PCOS, surgery could be an option. Depending on your age and the severity of your conditions, a doctor could recommend that you have surgery to remove scar tissue or cysts which could help with your fertility.

### Intrauterine Insemination (IUI).

This treatment is used to transfer sperm directly into the uterus. This method helps to increase the amount of sperm that make it into your fallopian tubes - increasing your chances for getting pregnant. It could also be recommended that you take fertility drugs when getting an IUI.

### In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF).

This process involves retrieving eggs, fertilizing them with sperm and then transferring the embryo to the uterus a few days later. Each round of IVF takes 4 to 6 weeks and although it is the most expensive treatment, it's commonly known as the most effective.

### Donor Eggs or Sperm.

Depending on various genetic issues, it may be recommended to use donor eggs or sperm to create healthy embryos. If it's egg donation, sperm will fertilize a healthy donated egg and then be transferred into the uterus. If sperm donation, the same process of IUI or IVF will take place considering the couple's needs.

## Surrogacy.

If a woman can't carry a baby because of issues with infertility, disease, hysterectomy, etc. using a surrogate could be an option. A surrogate can become pregnant by artificial insemination, IUI with the father's sperm, or through IVF using the couple's embryo.

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The most important thing to remember is that you have options throughout your fertility journey. Speak to your health care professional, ask questions and get educated on your options.

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## Fertility Apps.

Sometimes the best thing you can do for yourself during your fertility journey is stay informed and have some fun. Fertility apps allow you to keep track of your cycle, ovulation, and learn how to navigate your emotions. They can be great tools for understanding all of the uncertainties that come up during this time and increase your chances of getting pregnant.

Keep in mind that too much of anything isn't always better. Choose apps that help you to feel inspired, safe and hopeful, not overwhelmed.

## Best For Women Who Want To Track EVERYTHING



## Flo Period & Ovulation Tracker

Why we love it...

The Flo App allows you to take full control of your health. Their app uses machine learning to accurately predict when you are ovulating, help you keep track of your daily symptoms and manage your lifestyle by logging things like your sleep duration, water consumption, moods, physical activity, and basal temperature. It's easy to use, fun to interact with and keeps you on track and informed about what's going on with your cycle.

How much does it cost?

FREE

## Best For Balancing Hormones



## MyFLO Period & Fertility App by FLO Living

Why we love it...

The MyFLO App is the first-ever period tracker and fertility app that tells you what to do to be symptom free. This app helps you know if your hormones are healthy, educates you on the four phases of your cycle and gives you in-depth advice on what lifestyle changes you can do to optimize each phase.

This includes which foods, exercise, and social engagements you should be doing according to whatever cycle you are in. Best part? This app also increases your chances of pregnancy and improves your fertility.

**How much does it cost?**

\$1.99

## Best For Women Going Through Fertility Treatments



### **Glow Fertility, Period & Ovulation Tracker**

**Why we love it...**

Glow - winner of 2014 Webby for best Health & Fitness app, is a data-driven ovulation calculator & fertility tracker that helps you take control of your reproductive health. This app allows you to forecast your ovulation and upcoming period using predictions that get smarter over time. They also have community and partner support, reminders about medications and helps to assists those undergoing fertility treatments like IVF or IUI.

**How much does it cost?**

FREE (In-app purchases for Glow Premium)

## Best For Women Who Want Emotional Support



## Expectful App

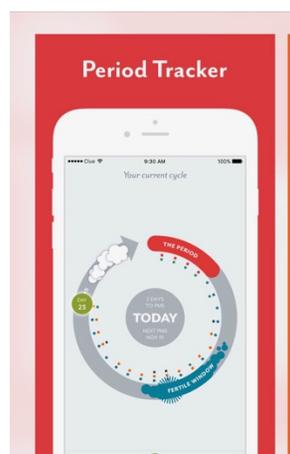
Why we love it...

I mean, could we really leave this out knowing how much it improves the lives of preparing to conceive women every day? Expectful's app provides you with trimester specific meditations that help you reduce risk factors, improve sleep, decrease stress, boost immunity, increase feelings of connection and reduce pain during labor. They also have meditations for nursing, couples meditations and a whole motherhood library for your fourth trimester.

How much does it cost?

\$9.00 month-to-month

## Best For Simplicity



## Clue Period & Ovulation Tracker

Why we love it...

The Clue app veers away from things like flowers, butterflies or pink because they believe that women should be able to use a fertility tracker that looks like it's made for adult women, not little girls. Clue has the fastest data entry of any period tracker, and an algorithm that learns from the data you input. Their iOS features, include reproductive health integration with the Health app, Touch ID and Today Extensions.

#### How much does it cost?

Free

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## Enjoy this time.

Whether you are just starting to think about getting pregnant or have been trying for awhile, let this guide be a place where you come for support and information. Refer back to it when you need and know that you are always the leading expert on you, remember to listen to how your body feels, nourish your mind and be kind to yourself.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, contact [care@expectful.com](mailto:care@expectful.com). We'd love to hear from you.

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Expectful Complete Guide to A Happy & Healthy Fertility Journey. 9 Chapters, 201 Pages. Get the eBook. What people are saying.

“Carrying a child is such a scary and huge responsibility. Meditating has provided me an outlet to focus inward. The relaxation and sleep meditations have been especially helpful, as I have learned how to calm my busy brain and focus on building the healthy little life growing in my belly.” Myrtle Miles Happy mom of two kids. “Expectful meditation helped me stay in the present and clear my mind. Within just a couple months I conceived and when new anxieties arose, We™ve partnered with Expectful, to provide you with science-backed advice about how meditation can improve your physical and mental well-being during pregnancy and as a new parent. Anna Gannon is a Yoga and Meditation Guide who writes and works for the digital platform. Her mission is to improve women™s emotional health during their fertility, pregnancy and new motherhood experience. I experienced a rollercoaster of emotions, from anticipation to anxiety, to love and fear, to a sense of adventure and a ton of uncertainty. The one thing that brought me comfort was knowing that when I saw my doctor he would be able to ease my worried mind and assure me that my baby was OK.