

## Maternity

# Planning for your next pregnancy and the future

There are no rules about when to start having sex again after you have given birth to your baby. You should wait until after the bleeding has stopped for a few days and you feel ready. This allows time for healing to take place and to prevent infection. It may take longer depending on your own recovery and if you have had stitches or a caesarean section. You may want to use a water based lubricant gel e.g. KY Jelly, to begin with. Hormonal changes after the birth can make your vagina drier than usual. It is very common during the early months to experience a reduction in sexual desire, due to many factors such as tiredness and adjusting to your new role as a mother. Returning to normal sexual relations can take different amounts of time for everyone. If you have any worries or concerns about this, speak to your midwife, health visitor or GP.

**Family Planning** - You can get pregnant as little as 3 weeks after the birth of your baby, even if you are breastfeeding. It's important to use contraception every time you have sex until you are ready to get pregnant again. There are many forms of contraception, ranging from natural family planning, barrier methods - male and female condoms, diaphragms, caps and hormonal contraception - pill and implants. Intra-uterine devices (coil) are also available. Female sterilisation (tubal ligation) and a vasectomy for men are the operations to permanently prevent pregnancy. Your midwife, GP, practice nurse and family planning clinic can provide you advice. For further information please visit [www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk). It is important to be aware that most methods of contraception do not protect you from sexually transmitted infections.



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**Folic acid** - Folic acid is a vitamin that is essential for the healthy development of a baby. It is known as vitamin B9. Folic acid is responsible for cell growth and development. This vitamin is vital to support the development of a baby's brain and spinal cord. When you are trying to get pregnant again, you should take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid daily. Start from the time you stop using contraception until the end of the 12th week of pregnancy. If you find out you are pregnant and have not started taking folic acid, start as soon as you have a positive pregnancy test. If you have: - pre-existing diabetes, epilepsy treated with medication, coeliac disease, BMI over 30 or you or your family have a history of spinal defects, you will require a higher dose of 5mg. The 5mgs dose is only available on prescription from your doctor. For further information please visit [www.fpa.org.uk/preparing-pregnancy](http://www.fpa.org.uk/preparing-pregnancy)

**Measles, Mumps and Rubella vaccination (MMR)** - It's a good idea to check you're fully protected against measles, mumps and rubella (German Measles) before getting pregnant again. Rubella infection in pregnancy can lead to serious birth defects and miscarriage. If you are not sure if you've had 2 doses of the MMR vaccine, ask your GP surgery to check for you. The vaccine is given in 2 separate doses, the 2nd injection is recommended to be given 1 month after the first. You are strongly advised to avoid getting pregnant for 1 month after an MMR vaccination. In the event that you find out you are pregnant within 1 month of an MMR vaccine, or you suspect you were pregnant when you received the MMR vaccination, please contact your midwife/GP for urgent advice.

**Screening** - If you did not have screening tests for your haemoglobin (Hb), blood group, antibodies, hepatitis B, syphilis, HIV, sickle cell and thalassaemia during your pregnancy, it is recommended to be done after your baby is born. The healthcare team looking after you will discuss this with you.

**Healthy eating and drinking** - It is important to eat a healthy balanced diet containing bread, breakfast cereals, potatoes, pasta, and rice to give you energy, as well as fruit and vegetables. Lean meat, chicken, fish, eggs and pulses are good sources of protein. Dairy foods, such as milk, cheese and yoghurt contain calcium as well as protein. It is also important that you are a healthy weight for your height before you become pregnant again. If you have concerns about your weight, discuss this with your midwife, GP, practice nurse or health visitor. There may be a

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local weight management group or slimming group in your area. Your healthcare team will be able to give you information regarding this.

**General postnatal exercise** - Postnatal exercises are very important and should be changed to suit your needs depending on the type of birth you have had. They include abdominal, leg and breathing exercises as well as relaxation techniques. If you had a birth with no problems, you can start gentle exercise as soon as you feel up to it. It is usually a good idea to wait until after your 6 week postnatal check before you start any high impact exercise e.g. running or aerobics. If you had a caesarean section, your recovery time may take longer. Please feel free to discuss this with your midwife/GP or health visitor.

**Domestic abuse** - 1 in 4 women experience domestic abuse at some point in their lives and many cases start or worsen during pregnancy or after the birth. It may take the form of physical, sexual, mental or emotional abuse, stalking and harassment, online or digital abuse or financial control. It can take place between couple relationships or between family members. Domestic abuse risks both your health and that of your baby. You can speak in confidence to your healthcare team who can offer help and support, or you can contact a support agency such as the National Domestic Violence Helpline. The Survivors Handbook provides practical support and information for women experiencing domestic abuse, with some guidance on seeking support. For further information visit [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

**Prescriptions and NHS dental treatment** - These are free for 12 months after you have given birth. Your child is also entitled to free prescriptions until the age of 16. To claim after your baby is born (if you did not claim whilst you were pregnant), ask your midwife/ GP or health visitor for information about how to get an exemption certificate. If you have private dental care, you will need to discuss this with your dental practice.

**Work and benefits** - The Money Advice Service has developed lots of helpful information on all financial aspects of the arrival of a new baby including budgeting, benefits and work options. You can access information online: [www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk](http://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk). Your employer should provide information about your options regarding returning to work and maternity leave entitlements. Child benefit is also available for each

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child from birth until at least age 16 and can be claimed by the mother or the person responsible for the care of the child.

**Family and friends test** - This is an important opportunity for you to provide feedback on the services that provide your care and treatment. Your feedback will help NHS England to improve services for everyone. You can ask a member of staff for more information about how this information is used. Completion is voluntary, but if you do answer, your feedback will provide valuable information for your hospital to celebrate good practice and find opportunities to make improvements. You will be asked to complete this survey after the birth of your baby either before you leave the hospital/birthing unit or at home if you had a home birth. The survey will be repeated when the community midwifery team discharge you from their care. For more information about the programme visit [www.england.nhs.uk/fft](http://www.england.nhs.uk/fft)

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this Information in another language or format, please contact us on 02476 967315 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email [feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk](mailto:feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk)

### Document History

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