



# Natural Fertility New Zealand Checklist

This checklist aims to help you understand the things that can have an effect on your fertility, and offers general advice for steps you can take to improve your chances of getting pregnant.

## Your cycle Understanding your menstrual cycle is a vital first step.

Did you stop using hormonal contraception more than six months ago?	Yes	No	Some women take longer to return to fertility after taking hormonal contraception – six months is quite common but it can take longer.
Is your menstrual cycle regular? Count the days of your cycle from the first day of your period (the day bleeding starts) to the day before your next period.	Yes	No	Keep a calendar of your cycle and note the first day of your period, how long it lasts for, when you notice extra vaginal mucus and the start of your next period. Take your temperature before you get up every day to check if you're ovulating - it is possible to have a period without ovulating.
Are you noticing extra vaginal mucus at any stage of your cycle?	Yes	No	When you're fertile, mucus is usually watery, almost colourless and has a wet sensation. Mark on your calendar when you notice extra mucus, its consistency and colour, when it changes and stops. This will help you identify your fertile time. If there are no signs at all over two menstrual cycles talk to your local Family Planning Clinic or doctor.
Are you and your partner having intercourse during the time you are noticing extra vaginal mucus?	Yes	No	Intercourse every other day when your body is producing fertile mucus will maximise your chances of pregnancy.
Do you (and your partner) know how to identify the fertile time in your menstrual cycle?	Yes	No	Natural Fertility New Zealand teaches women and couples about fertility and how to identify their most fertile times.
Do you have a regular menstrual cycle that's unusually long or short?	No	Yes	Natural Fertility New Zealand educators can help you identify when you are most likely to be fertile - even if you have an unusually long or short cycle.
Are you using a vaginal lubricant?	No	Yes	Many lubricants inhibit sperm motility. Try 'Pre Seed' - <a href="http://www.preseed.co.nz">www.preseed.co.nz</a>

If you answered 'yes' to the first three questions but are still finding it difficult to get pregnant, it might be time to consider other factors. It takes three months to build a record of your menstrual cycle so give yourself time for any changes to work. Or talk to your local Family Planning Clinic, your doctor or Natural Fertility New Zealand.

## You and your partner Your partner's health, as well as your own, has an important role to play.

Does your partner work with machinery that heats the genital area?	No	Yes	Heat can affect sperm production. For example, laptops on laps, cellphones in pockets, riding motorbikes and constant exposure to any equipment that heats the genital area. Some occupations where men are constantly around heat sources can cause a low sperm count <sup>1</sup> .
Do you or your partner have a very busy lifestyle, with a lot of stress?	No	Yes	Consider slowing down a bit and try to relax. Living on adrenaline can affect both male and female fertility.
Do you or your partner exercise intensely – such as training for marathons or triathlons?	No	Yes	Don't cut out exercise altogether as it's important for your health, but consider cutting down the amount you do - especially if it's affecting your cycle.
Have you or your partner ever had a sexually transmitted infection?	No	Yes	Some STIs affect fertility. Go for a sexual health check-up at your local Family Planning Clinic, sexual health clinic or see your doctor.
Do you and your partner eat a well-balanced diet?	Yes	No	If your diet lacks certain nutrients it can undermine your fertility. Get yourself on to a nutritious eating plan <sup>3</sup> and try to limit your caffeine intake.
Are you or your partner more than 5kg under or over the ideal weight for your height and build?	No	Yes	Check your ideal weight with your doctor, taking your ethnicity and BMI into account, and make a plan to help you reach your goal weight.
Are you or your partner taking any prescribed medication?	No	Yes	Some medications can affect female fertility and sperm production in males. Check with your local Family Planning Clinic or doctor to make sure the medication you're on is suitable for achieving pregnancy, and that it's okay to take when pregnant.

Maximising your fertility naturally may require your partner to make some changes. But keep in mind that it takes three months for sperm to mature so changes in your partner's lifestyle may take at least that time to be effective.

## Your lifestyle Lifestyle factors such as stress, diet and exercise can affect your fertility.

Are you breastfeeding?	No	Yes	Breastfeeding can prevent or delay fertility. If your fertility doesn't return once your baby is fully weaned, talk to your Family Planning Clinic, doctor or Natural Fertility New Zealand.
Do you need to get pregnant within a certain timeframe? Reasons may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you or your partner's age</li> <li>• endometriosis surgery</li> <li>• upcoming travel</li> <li>• a strict timeframe for sperm donation</li> <li>• taking medication you need to stop before conceiving and while pregnant, such as some anti-depressants.</li> </ul>	No	Yes	Natural Fertility Educators are trained to work with women and couples to help them to identify their most fertile times and maximise the chances of pregnancy.  If one of our educators pinpoints a problem such as lack of ovulation or a short luteal phase <sup>2</sup> , they will, with your consent, refer you to a medical specialist.
Are you taking any natural health supplements or 'off the shelf' medications such as cough mixture or hay fever medication that dry up mucus?	No	Yes	Check with your pharmacist or health professional to ensure they are suitable. Some products can reduce the production of mucus needed to help the sperm on its journey to the egg.
Do you or your partner smoke cigarettes or use marijuana?	No	Yes	Smoking cigarettes or using marijuana by either partner can prevent pregnancy. It also increases the risk of miscarriage and of your baby developing childhood cancer.
Do you or your partner use recreational or hard drugs?	No	Yes	Drugs can stop you falling pregnant and inhibit the healthy development of the foetus.
Do you or your partner have more than the weekly recommended intake of alcohol for your age, size and gender?	No	Yes	Alcohol consumption by either partner reduces the chances of conception and can affect a baby's development or cause miscarriage.
Do you or your partner have more than five caffeinated drinks a day, such as coffee, tea, cola or energy drinks?	No	Yes	Caffeine decreases your chances of pregnancy and increases the risk of miscarriage. Cut down or cut it out altogether if you can.
Do you work with chemicals or other harmful substances?	No	Yes	Ensure you wear the recommended protective clothing at all times. If in doubt check, and if you can't check then assume that the substances could be harmful and protect yourself. <sup>1</sup>

If most of your answers are in the green column and you've been trying to get pregnant for 12 months - or six months if you're over 35 - it may be time to get some help. Talk to your local Family Planning Clinic, your doctor or Natural Fertility New Zealand to discuss your options.

If most of your answers are blue, use the tips provided to boost your chances of getting pregnant naturally.

## References Lifestyle factors such as stress, diet and exercise can affect your fertility.

<sup>1</sup> Occupations – heating of the testicular area and exposure to certain chemicals and environmental risks are more highly associated with adverse effects on fertility. Look out for:

- Heat - such as experienced by chefs, taxi drivers or long distance truck drivers, where a lot of time is spent sitting, as well as occupations where men wear protective clothing for a large part of the day
- Chemicals - such as ethylene oxide used to sterilise surgical instruments and in manufacturing some pesticides
- Environmental risk - such as exposure to lead based paints and varnishes, chemical and waste materials, chemicals used in paper manufacturing processes, repeated exposure to radiation such as in x-rays and cancer treatments.

<sup>2</sup> Luteal Phase – is the time from ovulation to the onset of a woman's period. A luteal phase of at least 10 days is necessary for the pregnancy to be established before the endometrium starts to break down with the onset of the period (menstruation).

<sup>3</sup> Weight and Fertility – It's best to consult your health professional for specialised and individual help if you feel you are seriously under or overweight. For tips and strategies for maintaining a healthy lifestyle, the Healthy Food Guide magazine and website is a great resource – [www.healthyfoodguide.co.nz](http://www.healthyfoodguide.co.nz)

## Contributors The following New Zealand charities have collaborated to produce this check-list, which has been peer reviewed by their respective medical boards.

**Natural Fertility New Zealand Inc**  
Charities Commission Reg.No.CC24974

Fertility educators throughout New Zealand work with individuals, couples and medical professionals to identify variations in the menstrual cycle and lifestyle factors that affect fertility. The service is particularly useful if you are wanting to plan your pregnancy, are experiencing unexplained infertility, or if your partner has a low sperm count.

**Phone** 0800 178 637  
**Email** [info@naturalfertility.co.nz](mailto:info@naturalfertility.co.nz)  
or [helpline@naturalfertility.co.nz](mailto:helpline@naturalfertility.co.nz)  
**www.naturalfertility.co.nz**

**Endometriosis New Zealand Inc**  
Charities Commission Reg.No.CC20902

Endometriosis New Zealand represents tens of thousands of women and girls in New Zealand with endometriosis, and works with those who treat the condition.

**Phone** 0800 733 277  
**Email** [nzendo@xtra.co.nz](mailto:nzendo@xtra.co.nz)  
**www.nzendo.co.nz**

**Family Planning**  
Charities Commission Reg.No. CC11104

Family Planning works to promote a positive view of sexuality and to enable people to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health and well-being. We provide clinical services, education and health promotion services, resource development, and professional training in sexual and reproductive health.

**Phone** 0800 InfoLine (0800 4636 5463)  
**www.familyplanning.org.nz**