

# Conceive and Deliver a Truly Healthy Baby

## Improving Fertility and Creating Optimal Health

by Jan Roberts B.Pharm (Hons) Diploma Clinical Nutrition

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, 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 4 has a Caesarean section (more in some hospitals)**
- 1 woman in 3 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 optimal health of all organ and endocrine systems. 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 pre conception 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 nutritional, lifestyle and environmental factors that can lead to infertility and fetal health issues.

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, 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 wholefood nutrition, healthy lifestyle, clean environment and regular exercise, all of which are outlined in my books and on my website [www.flurishh.com](http://www.flurishh.com), many are unaware of the products that support the endocrine system and its optimal function. As I say to many of my patients there is no point putting fuel in your car if your engine isn’t tuned.

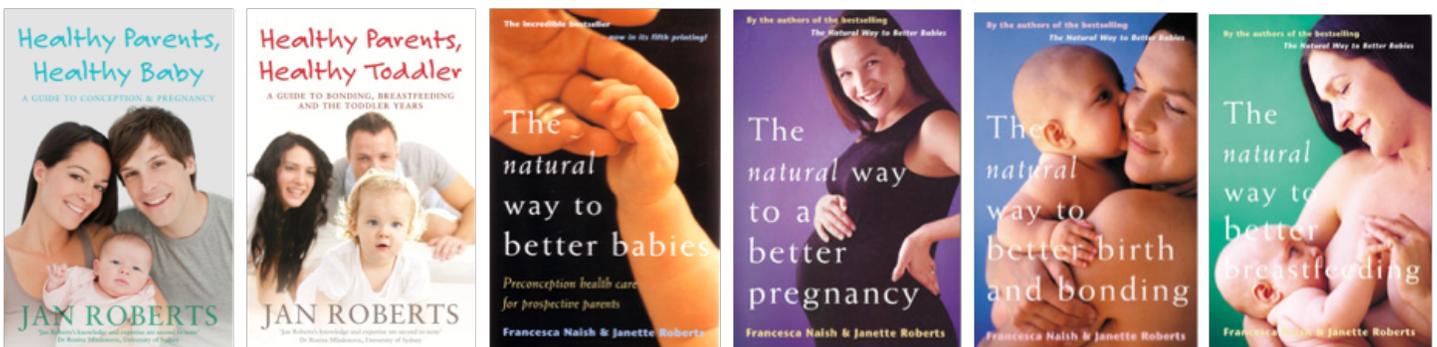
Foundation health covers factors such as hormone balance, immune competence, neurotransmitter production, fat and energy metabolism, healthy gut microflora and more and in order to address all of these issues I start with adaptogens. Adaptogens are herbs long recognized and valued for their seeming ‘intelligence’ and ability to create harmony and homeostasis in the body. More recently, research has found that one particular adaptogen, called maca, is particularly beneficial for creating sound foundation health and optimizing fertility. Even more interesting, this research has shown that different types of maca, know as phenotypes, have distinct effects on separate aspects of fertility. For example black maca has been shown to improve sperm production and motility in men, 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 suffering from conditions such as Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS). Hormone balance is the key foundation around which all fertility and health is based, with hormone imbalance one of the common causes of miscarriage, which 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 thirteen 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 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 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 microflora, 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 production. Thus the combination of Femmenessence for her, Revolution for him and a robust probiotic product for both are key foundations 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!

Jan Roberts has spent almost 45 years in the health care industry. For more than 30 years she has provided information for prospective Mums and Dads - “the physical and mental health of your children is in your hands and has its foundation in your own health before conception.” Jan is the author of six best-selling books, has made hundreds of presentation to professionals and prospective parents and most recently she has developed a casual game to teach and entertain. 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.

Read more from Jan in her latest books/ebooks:



## 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 or core health - adaptogenic products such as Femmenessence MacaHarmony (for her) and Revolution Macalibrium (for him) will support fertility and ensure that all of the following health promotion measures achieve optimal results!

**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.

**Eat** organically grown, fresh vegetables and fruit that are in season - pH Quintessence is an additional super green which is a 40:1 concentration of Non-GMO alfalfa that can further support and enhance these dietary changes and ensure an alkaline pH which is critical for conception.

**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 line-up) and limit your exposure to electromagnetic radiation (mobile phones, laptops, notepads, tablets, out of pockets and off laps).

**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.