

Oula



# Oula's Guide to Preconception

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# Congratulations on starting your preconception journey!



Whether you're just beginning to consider pregnancy or actively trying to conceive, we understand the weight and complexity of this journey. This guide is designed to be your trusted, research-backed tool to answer common questions that come up during preconception.

We're here to support you every step of the way. If you have any additional questions after your visit, please reach out—we always want to hear from you.

– The Oula Team



Oula

PART ONE

# Introduction

Oula

# Oula's approach

Oula delivers maternity care that grows with you, offering comprehensive support before, during, and after pregnancy.



## Caring for you, not just your pregnancy

Comprehensive care that considers your physical, mental, and emotional needs. We take your lived experience into account and support you at every stage of life—before, during, and after pregnancy.



## A research-backed approach for better outcomes

Fewer C-sections, higher VBAC success rates, and fewer preterm births—we are setting a new standard in maternity care that delivers better outcomes for you and your baby.

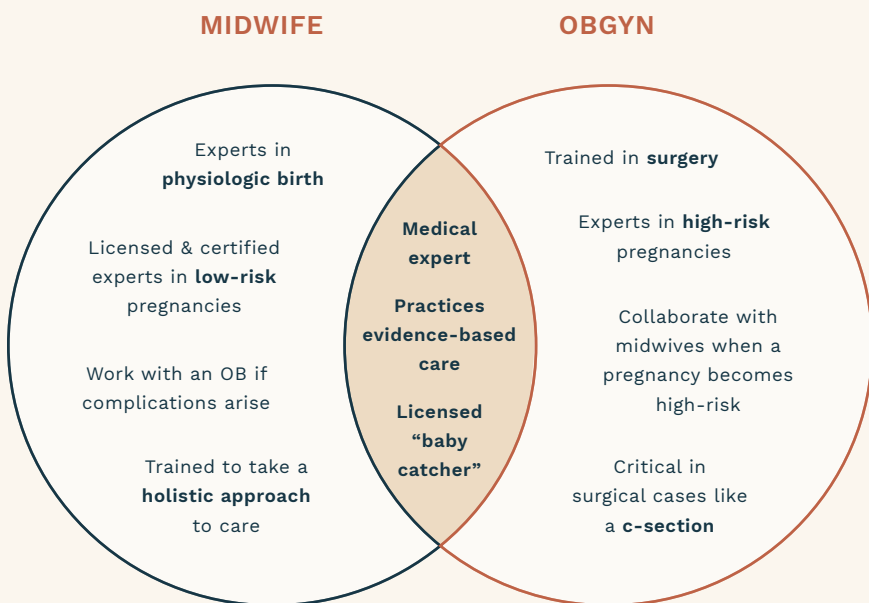


## Meeting you where you are, without judgment

At Oula, there's no right way to give birth. We listen, respect your preferences, and make decisions with you, not for you.

# The right provider, when you need them

Our team of trusted midwives, OBGYNs and dedicated care navigators ensure you get the type of care you need in the moments that matter most.



“ Finding Oula was such a blessing because I didn’t have to choose either or. I got the extra emotional support I craved from the midwives, but the peace of mind knowing that and OBGYN and Mt Sinai West Hospital were also at my disposal.”

— ABBY, OULA PATIENT

At Oula we combine the best of obstetrics and midwifery to provide comprehensive, research-backed care. Our team model allows you to meet all of our midwives during your prenatal care so you get to know everyone who will be at the hospital prior to your labor and birth experience.



## Midwives

We like to say that everyone needs a midwife and some people need a doctor too. **Midwives are licensed and certified medical practitioners with particular expertise in low-risk pregnancies. Importantly, midwives are trained to pay particular attention to the “whole person.”** Many people feel judged or dismissed by their care providers today, but midwives work to understand how a person’s needs and their health are intertwined with their family, their community, their work, and their home.



## OBGYNs

Just like midwives, OBGYNs are skilled, licensed, and certified medical professionals, yet they offer their services to both low and high risk birth (think pre-existing conditions, maternal or fetal issues that arise during pregnancy) and are **critical in cases where a surgical intervention like a c-section is necessary.** We believe the best care results from having access to both.

# The experience you deserve, covered by insurance.

Get the time and attention you need in our welcoming clinics, plus access to virtual support, expert resources, and exclusive perks—all covered by insurance.



## The Oula Portal

Keep Oula in your pocket between appointments.

- Navigate key decisions, build your personalized birth plan, and learn what's coming up next.
- Access educational resources, perks from brand partners, and virtual classes/workshops.
- Message your care team anytime you need support or guidance.



# What we offer



## Preconception counseling

From demystifying cycle tracking and fertile windows to preparing for genetic testing, we've curated **a preconception program that goes beyond traditional care and offers personalized support**, uniquely tailored to meet your needs. We offer virtual preconception counseling for those ready to begin their pregnancy journey.



## Prenatal visits

At Oula, **we offer support as soon as you get a positive pregnancy test, starting with a virtual consult.** We'll schedule monthly appointments up until 28 weeks, bi-weekly until 36 weeks, and weekly until birth. Prenatal visits include clinical assessment of you and your baby, necessary bloodwork, ultrasounds and referrals for specialized testing.



## Virtual classes & visits

Meet with our care team from the comfort of your own home. We include virtual classes in your care at Oula, including our Birth preferences workshop for all of your FAQs, and an Empowered birth workshop for our Black patients. We also offer free workshops and discounts from our favorite brands.



## Delivery

Today, all Oula babies are delivered at the hospital and your care team is on call 24/7 awaiting your labor! At the hospital, Oula midwives will be leading your care in close partnership with hospital staff. We're committed to leading with research-backed care and including you in all decisions. Note that we do not offer home birth or water birth services.



## Fourth trimester care

We'll keep supporting you after the baby has arrived. You can reach out to us anytime throughout those critical first weeks, and **join our free Newborn Feeding Group** with a lactation consultant.



## Gynecology

Our midwives & OBGYNs take the time to get to know you, focusing on your reproductive health while prioritizing all your parts—not just the ones down there. Whether you're due for your annual, navigating a gynecological issue, or planning to start a family, **we'll support you at every stage of your journey.**

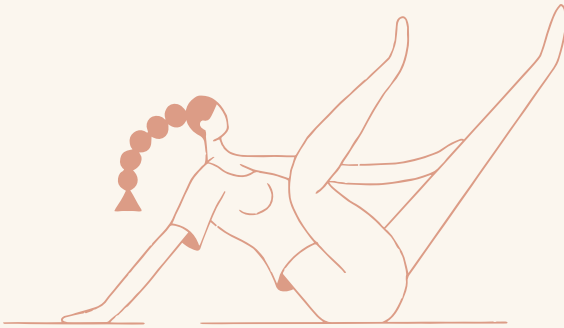


PART TWO

# Preconception



Planning for pregnancy can be an amazing time of learning, self-reflection, and positive motivation!



This is a great time to tune in to your body, identify any health issues you'd like to address, start taking prenatal vitamins, consider exposure to possible toxins at home or work, and begin to explore your employer's parental benefits.

Throughout this process, it's important to remember that trying to conceive looks different for each person, so remember to be patient and kind to yourself.

# How to optimize your body for fertility & pregnancy



## Healthy habits

Continue or begin preventative visits for physical, dental and mental health care. Do a survey of toxin exposures at home and at work to assess your risk exposure.



## Nutrition

Start optimizing your nutritional intake with a review of whole foods, a balanced diet, and identify gaps in your lifestyle or preferences.



## Vitamins & supplements

Consider taking a comprehensive prenatal vitamin and learn about which key components to look out for.



## Exercise & sleep

Move your body! Aim to maintain a regular exercise routine and make sure you get your z's. Establish a healthy bedtime ritual and strive for a minimum of 8 hours of sleep each night!



## Mindfulness & stress relief

Work on managing stressors. Check out a meditation app, say “no” to things that aren’t serving you and reach out to a mental health provider for support if you need someone to talk to.

# Healthy habits

## CONTINUE OR BEGIN A PREVENTATIVE, HOLISTIC HEALTH CARE APPROACH

- Stay up-to-date with your primary care visits. Haven't seen someone in person recently? Schedule an [Annual Exam](#) and check in on your vaccination status.
- Schedule an appointment with a dentist and maintain routine dental care every 6 months.
- Considered therapy but never quite made it? Start by getting a baseline therapist assessment to explore your mental health needs for your preconception journey. Reach out to our care team if you need a recommendation.

## CONSIDER EXPOSURE RISK AT HOME AND WORK

Now is a great time to understand what toxins you might be exposed to in your home and workplace. Not sure about an ingredient or exposure risk? Check in with our care team!

- **At home**, avoid plastics and BPA, phthalates, retinoids and secondhand smoke exposure. Make sure there's no asbestos or lead paint in your home.
- **At work**, keep an eye out for pesticides (**agriculture**), organic solvents and heavy metals (**manufacturing**), solvents (**dry cleaning**), or biologics and radiation (**health care**).

## ELIMINATE TOXIC HABITS AND REPLACE THEM WITH HEALTHY ONES

- Take this moment as an opportunity to finally quit smoking, reduce alcohol intake, or cut back on your use of recreational drugs. Ask your partner or sperm source to make a similar commitment to health & wellbeing. It's a chance to assess habits that may not support you on your journey to preconception and eventual parenting.
- This is an ideal time to delve into mindfulness practices, pursue that dance class you've always wanted to try, and rekindle connections with friends who have already started their parenting journey.

### TIP

**[CLICK HERE](#)** to learn more and speak with a toxicologist about medications, supplements, and herbal risks in preconception and pregnancy.

# Nutrition

Lifestyle factors, like nutrition, play a vital role in preparing your body for pregnancy. **You can start optimizing your nutritional intake about ~3 months ahead of trying to conceive.** Speak with a member of our care team to understand your Body Mass Index and how to create a personalized approach to nutrition. A BMI of  $<18.5$  or  $>24.5$  may impact your fertility. Overall you'll want to aim for a **BALANCED DIET** including whole grains, vegetables and healthy fats.

When you are trying to conceive, it's important to support your body with nutrient dense foods while also beginning to control your blood sugar. This will ensure you've got stores of key nutrients your body needs in the first few weeks of pregnancy.



Focus on whole unprocessed foods, a variety of colorful vegetables and fruits, high quality proteins like fish, eggs, beans, and lentils alongside healthy oils and fats like olive oil, coconut oil & avocados and the micronutrients of leafy greens.

THE KEY NUTRIENTS TO CONSIDER ARE:

|            |                      |
|------------|----------------------|
| Folate     | Probiotic rich foods |
| Vitamin B6 | Omega 3s             |
| Iron       |                      |

TIP

Smoothies are a quick and easy way to combine protein, fiber, greens and nutrient dense foods into one tasty snack.



## Vitamins & supplements

While we want you to get most of your nutrients from whole foods during preconception, it's important to supplement with prenatal vitamins to fill in any nutritional gaps. You'll want to start taking prenatal vitamins (specifically folate and DHA) about ~3 months before trying to conceive.

When it comes to prenatal vitamins,  
focus on the following:

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## Folate

**400-800 MG UNTIL  
THE END OF THE  
FIRST TRIMESTER**

Helps to reduce the risk of birth defects to the baby's brain and spine (especially important in early embryonic development), and supports red blood cell formation

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## Vitamin D

**600 INTERNATIONAL  
UNITS**

Supports female fertility, bone health, and immune function

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## Iron

**30 MG UNTIL SCREENED  
FOR ANEMIA**

Helps to prevent anemia, supports healthy egg quality, ovulation, and energy levels

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## Calcium

**1,000 MG**

Supports bone health

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## DHA

**200-300 MG**

Supports hormones, increases blood flow to the uterus, reduces inflammation, supports implantation

# Exercise & sleep

Exercise in the preconception phase can help positively impact your fertility, reduce the effects of some chronic health conditions, prevent excessive weight gain prior to conceiving and help to improve your quality of life overall by decreasing stress and boosting your mood. Many people wonder what type of exercise is best when trying to conceive.

**Choose an exercise plan that feels good to you, reduces stress or anxiety, and is something you can do consistently.**

Aim for physical activity on most days, including minimizing prolonged sitting around your home or apartment. Set a goal of 30 minutes of exercise daily, 3-4 times a week, including muscle strength training 2x/week—but remember, any physical activity is better than none!



When it comes to sleep, studies have shown that **getting enough quality sleep has a positive impact on hormone production** including progesterone, estrogen, leptin, and FSH. This means it is important to develop healthy sleep hygiene when trying to conceive to support your hormone health and promote mental and physical well being.

## Tips for maintaining healthy sleep:

- 1 **Be consistent:** Go to sleep and wake up at similar times each day, regardless of whether it is a weekday or weekend.
- 2 **Create a nighttime routine:** Implementing a wind down routine (dimming the lights, reading a book) to help you fall asleep more seamlessly.
- 3 **Set up an ideal environment for sleep:** Set your room to a cool temperature, block out light, and make sure you have comfortable bedding and pillows.
- 4 **Cultivate a daytime routine:** Implementing healthy daily habits can support your circadian rhythm! Get exposure to sunlight, be physically active, ditch that afternoon coffee and night cap.

# Mindfulness & stress relief

It's no secret that trying to conceive can be stressful and emotionally draining, and we've all heard that stress can negatively impact fertility, so then we are STRESSED about being stressed! Luckily, there are some tried and true methods we can employ to relieve stress and help ease anxiety when moving through this journey.



## Strategies to reduce stress and anxiety:

1

**Create a meditation practice:** research shows that meditation can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression and actually decrease the frequency of negative thoughts.

2

**Keep moving:** Exercise is a great way to destress. Do whatever physical activity makes you feel your best—whether that be doing something outdoors, a team sport, or a yoga class.

3

**Stay social, but be mindful of social media:** Don't forget about your hobbies! Prioritize the activities you do with friends that bring you joy and make you feel like you, but set healthy boundaries with social media. Comparing yourself to your peers may only make you feel disheartened. Focus on you—everyone's journey looks different.

4

**Try acupuncture:** Acupuncture has been found to reduce anxiety and calm the nervous system. It may also increase blood flow to the uterus and ovaries, which may help conception.

5

**Reach out to a mental health provider** for talk therapy and emotional support if you are feeling overwhelmed, anxious, depressed or just need someone to talk to. If you already have a psychiatrist, make sure they're comfortable providing support during the perinatal phase. Medication changes are sometimes necessary during these transitional times.

# Understanding your body & tracking your cycle

It's a good idea to start understanding your cycle whenever you're thinking about trying to conceive. **Cycle tracking can help you estimate ovulation and understand hormonal changes in you body.** Tracking your cycle might help you know when to try for your next pregnancy cycle.

A good place to start is to track your ovulation and period using any of the available apps on your phone. You can buy "ovulation predictor kits" online that involve peeing on a strip to help you understand when in your cycle you typically ovulate. This could be around day 14, or perhaps later around day 21. Note that your "fertile window" is 5 days prior to ovulation and the day of ovulation.

## THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO GET CLUES ABOUT YOUR CYCLE, SUCH AS:

- Measuring your cycle length
- Monitoring how your cervical mucus changes (there is usually a pattern!)
- Measuring your "basal body temperature" right when you wake up in the morning

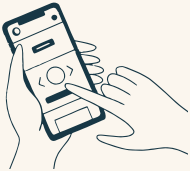


## Cycle Tracking

Offers retrospective data—a look back at previous cycles which can help predict ovulation in future cycles

### How do I track my cycle data?

- You can use an old fashioned **calendar or chart** (digital or paper)
- You can use a **period tracking app**



## Ovulation Testing

Offers real time evidence of ovulation & actionable info to try to achieve pregnancy this cycle

- **Ovulation predictor kits:** you'll need to purchase a urine test to monitor for LH hormonal surge
- **Basal body temperature checks:** you'll need to have a specialized thermometer that can measure your temperature to 1/100th of a degree
- **Cervical mucus checks:** manually check with your fingers for changes to slippery vaginal discharge and chart changes during your cycle

## Tips:

1

Frequent exposure to sperm in your fertile window will increase your likelihood of conception. Target intercourse or sperm exposure daily or every other day during your identified fertile window. Note that sperm can live anywhere from a few hours up to five days inside the female reproductive tract.

2

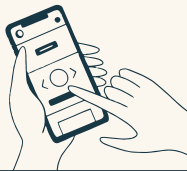
If you are using intra-vaginal or uterine insemination at home or in a clinic setting, work with a provider to determine the optimal sperm exposure date based on your personalized data.

3

If you are having irregular cycles or conceiving with assisted reproductive technology (such as IVI or IUI), you may need additional testing, medication or education.

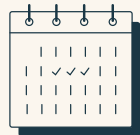
### CYCLE TRACKING

- **Period tracking app**
- **Calendar**



### OVULATION MONITORING

- **Ovulation predictor kits /** urine sticks
- A **sensitive thermometer** for basal body temperatures
- **Checking cervical mucus** with your fingers



## What is the “fertile window”?

The average menstrual cycle includes a specific period of time when exposure to sperm can result in pregnancy; this “**fertile window**” comprises the two to five days before ovulation and one day after ovulation.



## When to seek additional support:

- You have been trying for:
  - **1 year** if you are <35
  - **6 months** if you are 35+
- You are **over 40**
- You are concerned you **aren't ovulating**
- You live with a **gynecologic health or hormone condition** (i.e. endometriosis, PCOS, cysts or a known hormonal imbalance)
- You require **intra-vaginal** or **uterine insemination**
- If you have a male partner or known sperm donor, they may want to seek primary care evaluation at the same time that you do



# Carrier Genetic Testing

Carrier Testing looks for recessive gene disorders that you or your partner (or sperm donor) carry. It's very common to carry one of these genes without having the disorder, but you and your partner or sperm donor would both have to carry the same recessive gene and both pass it on for there to be any chance of your child having one of these genetic disorders.

Carrier testing is something that only needs to be done once in your life so if you have already had carrier testing, you do not need to repeat it. If you haven't and are ready to learn more, we can offer this bloodwork to you at Oula, just let us know by giving a call to (718) 400-8339. Make sure you call your insurance provider prior to testing to confirm coverage of this labwork.



**[CLICK HERE](#)** to learn more about Genetic Testing



PART THREE

# Next steps

Oula

# Understand your benefits

Prior to getting pregnant, it's a great idea to review your employee benefits and insurance plan to figure out which parts of maternity care are covered.

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## **PRENATAL CARE**

- Prenatal visits
  - Standard blood work & sonograms
  - Hospital stay
  - Additional care, if risk factors are identified
- 

## **POSTPARTUM CARE**

- Postnatal visits
  - Breast pump
  - Lactation consultation
- 

## **PARENTAL LEAVE**

- 6 weeks “paid” leave if vaginal, 8 weeks if cesarean
- Additional state-level parental leave (2021: 12 weeks of leave at 67% of average weekly wage)

# Recommended next steps

1

At the end of your preconception visit, our Care Team will align with you around next steps and we will reach out to you to schedule your next appointment.

2

Haven't had an annual exam in over a year? Have any concerns about your gynecological health arisen during your visit? Come **join us in person for a well-person or follow-up visit** with one of our care providers at Oula.

3

Are you up to date on your GYN care but need to start carrier testing and assess your immunization status? Give us a call at (718) 400-8339 to arrange an in-person visit for lab work.

4

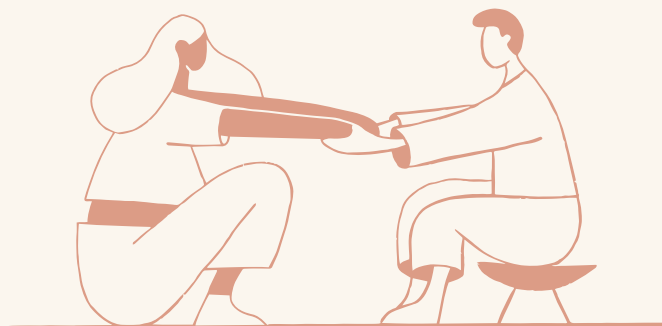
Need a referral to a Maternal Fetal Medicine specialist, Reproductive Endocrinologist (REI), genetics counselor, or other related specialist? Send us a message in the portal!

5

Need your prenatal vitamins to be covered by insurance? Send us a message in the portal and we will make sure you have the prescriptions you need.



**[CLICK HERE](#)** for our list of Preconception Referrals and Resources



As you continue on your preconception journey, reach out to Oula if you're not pregnant in 6-12 months or if you have questions at any time!

When you do get pregnant, book your virtual intake appointment as soon as you find out the good news! At Oula, we're proud to support you as early as a positive pregnancy test, starting with your Virtual Intake Visit. In this visit, you'll chat with one of our midwives to learn more about your care at Oula, review your history and any changes since we've last seen you and complete the intake process. As a next step, you'll schedule your Dating and Viability ultrasound as early as 8 weeks.

**Book your first appointment today. We can't wait to see you.**

**BOOK NOW**



PART FOUR

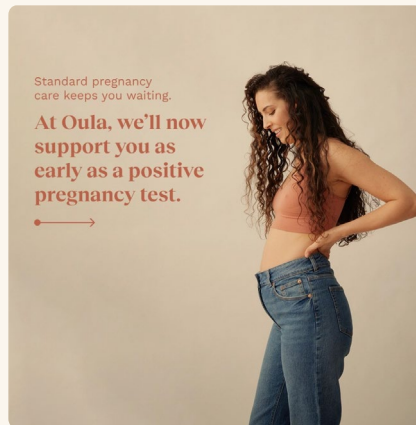
# Stay in touch

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# Follow us on social



Follow us @oulahealth on instagram



## CONTACT US

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# New York

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## Soho Clinic

**LOCATION**

202 Spring St.  
New York, NY

**PHONE**

(646) 889-2211  
Fax: (917) 475-1014

**EMAIL**

hellonyc@oulahealth.com



## Upper West Clinic

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New York, NY 10025

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**EMAIL**

hellonyc@oulahealth.com



## Brooklyn Clinic

**LOCATION**

109 Montague Street,  
Brooklyn, NY

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(718) 400-8339  
Fax: (718) 576-3434

**EMAIL**

hellonyc@oulahealth.com

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# Connecticut

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## Norwalk Clinic

**LOCATION**

255 Westport Ave,  
Norwalk, CT 06851

**PHONE**

(203) 349-2950  
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hellocot@oulahealth.com

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# North Carolina

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## Cotswold Clinic

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Charlotte, NC 28211

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