

Issue 06  
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# Preconception Screening



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## What is a pre-conception screening?

This type of screening is getting increasingly more popular with couples and is designed for women of childbearing age who are planning to start a family. The checks include the ideal Body Mass Index (BMI), blood pressure, pap smear, and blood tests to determine whether the woman is up-to-date with her vaccinations such as Rubella (German measles) and Hepatitis B. If the woman is discovered to have no immunity against Rubella, for example, vaccinations can be done before she gets pregnant as having Rubella infection during pregnancy can lead to a miscarriage, stillbirth or congenital rubella syndrome in the child. Vaccinations will help prevent such infections.

## What is an Ultrasound Scan?

Ultrasound scans are performed to determine if the womb is normal, that there are no unusual cysts in the ovary, fibroids in the womb or polyps in the endometrial cavity that could affect pregnancy or the possibility reducing the chances of conceiving or increasing the risk of miscarriage.

## What are antenatal blood tests for?

Blood tests are also done to check if they are thalassemia carriers, anaemic or have syphilis infections. The blood test would also identify their blood group – this is important as a Rhesus negative mother who has a Rhesus positive baby could put her subsequent babies at risk.

## What is the purpose of pap smears and cervical cancer vaccination?

HPV (Human Papillomavirus) are infections that can show up as an abnormal pap smear, especially if the woman has not been going for regular pap smears. Prospective mothers can be vaccinated with HPV vaccinations before conceiving (Gardasil 9, Cervarix) to prevent HPV infections and subsequent cervical pre-cancer or cancer.

## what happens during a preconception consultation?

The half an hour consultation is accompanied by advice on achieving a well balanced diet as well as the benefits of pre-conception multivitamins and folic acid for husband and wife. Additional advice on fine tuning the best times to optimise one's chances of becoming pregnant is also given.