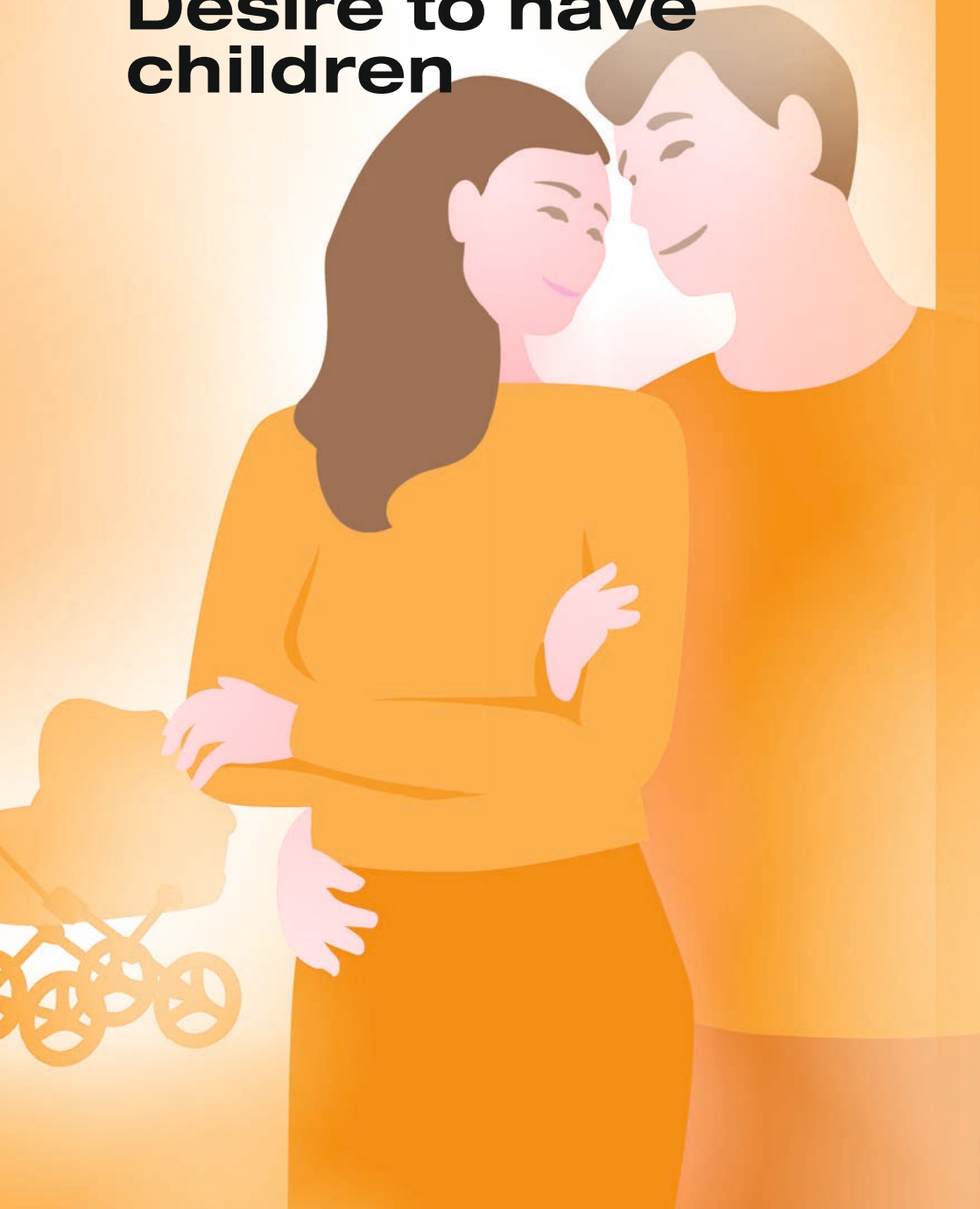


Guide Part 1

Desire to have children





Guide Part 1 Desire to have children

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The following additional brochures can be obtained from Andreabal AG:

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- 3. Nutrition: What pregnant women should bear in mind 9
- 4. Cat excrement, cigarettes, medicines: avoid any risks 12
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Guide Part 1 Desire to have children

1. Preparing for the pregnancy

Do you harbour the desire to have children of your own? Would you like to start a family? You will certainly have a lot of questions then. This guidebook aims to accompany you on your way and provide you with important information.

A pregnancy should be well prepared – for the good of the child as well as the mother. The best thing is to talk to your gynaecologist early on about your plans for having a baby, and to get some advice.

Zurich gynaecologist Lea Köchli: she is the expert in this guide who provides detailed information in interviews on the three topics of wanting a child, pregnancy and breastfeeding.

2. Healthy lifestyle

In order to create the optimum conditions for pregnancy, a healthy, balanced lifestyle is of crucial importance – this applies not only to the woman but also to the man. (See point 6.)

Alcohol consumption should be kept in moderation and smoking should be completely avoided. Pay attention to your weight, getting enough rest and to your diet. Scientific studies show that requirements for micronutrients are 50 to 100 percent higher during pregnancy and breastfeeding.



In order for the foetus to develop well in the mother's womb, it needs an adequate supply of vitamins, minerals, trace elements as well as fatty and amino acids at an early stage.

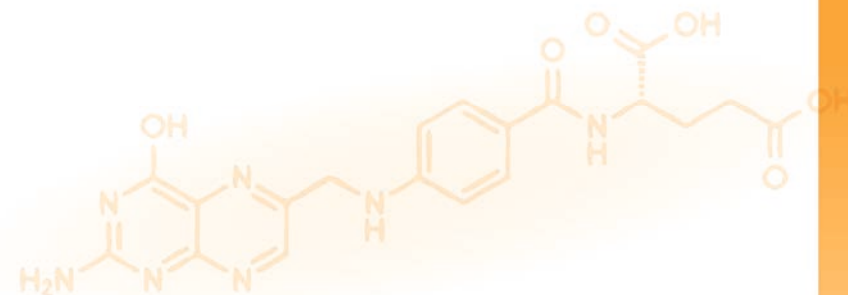
Eat plenty of fruit, vegetables, milk and wholemeal products even before you become pregnant. It is also advisable to eat low-fat meat (chicken, pork, lamb or veal fillet): this contains high-quality iron, which can prevent anaemia.

3. The central importance of folic acid

The vitamin folic acid has a key role to play. Without folic acid, cell division is unable to take place, and the formation of red blood cells is also at risk of being negatively affected. As the foetus grows rapidly, it is dependent on a lot of folic acid – which is why it is so important that pregnant women are covered with a correspondingly high level thereof.

A deficiency in folic acid carries the risk of neural tube defects: Serious malformations can occur in the child-to-be because the spinal column does not close properly. The medical world speaks of spina bifida – the open back. About half of the affected children die, while the others usually remain paralysed in the legs and pelvic floor for life and are dependent on a wheelchair. Faecal and urinary incontinence often accompany the disability.

For this reason, taking additional folic acid in the form of a daily tablet containing 400 micrograms is recommended even before pregnancy. Extensive studies have shown that, thanks to this folic acid preventative, the likelihood of neural tube defects is reduced by half.



4. Preventing further birth defects with folic acid

Taking folic acid early on can also reduce the risk of premature births and miscarriages. New findings also show that folic acid helps to reduce other birth defects such as cleft lip and palate, congenital heart defects, Down's syndrome or urinary tract malformations.

It is important to start taking it at least four weeks before conception and to continue for ten weeks beyond that. Given that the time of conception is uncertain, all women who want to or could become pregnant should take a folic acid supplement continuously.

Folic acid is particularly important for those women who stop taking the "pill" in order to have children. Contraceptive hormone preparations can lower the folic acid level in the body and thus increase the risk. It is recommended to start taking a folic acid supplement regularly 1–2 months before stopping the "pill".



"Folic acid requirements are barely covered by a healthy diet".

The Zurich gynaecologist on the role of age when it comes to pregnancy, the importance of folic acid and the risk of miscarriages.

5. Expert interview with Lea Köchli

At what point should a woman start taking additional folic acid?

Ideally, it should be started three months before the expected time of conception. This is a rule of thumb, but it is not so easy to plan. Folic acid should, however, be taken no later than four weeks before pregnancy or when the contraceptive is stopped.

What role does age play?

I recommend that younger and older women alike start three months before their expected pregnancy. The young generation in particular, more and more of whom are eating a vegan diet, is deficient in folic acid.

Is it not enough to eat a healthy diet?

No, requirements are barely able to be met. To do this, you would have to eat at least five meals a day containing extra folic acid – such as green vegetables or leaf spinach. However, you need to know that folates are substances that are extremely sensitive to heat. In cooked food, they decompose and are not able to be utilised by the body.

Do you also recommend the patient's partner to take folic acid?

Does this improve sperm quality?

Recent observational data show that the quality, but also the quantity, of sperm can be increased by up to 70 percent when folic acid is taken in combination with zinc. Also, there are fewer defects in the genetic material of the sperm cells. I therefore recommend that men also take such preparations.

At what point do you recommend approaching a gynaecologist if one does not get pregnant?

Again, there is a rule of thumb: women who are younger than 35 should contact their gynaecologist after 12 months. Women older than 35 years are advised to contact their gynaecologist after six months. Prerequisites for these recommendations are a regular menstrual cycle and regular sexual activity with a partner.

Are there any statistics on how long it takes for a woman to become pregnant?

Many couples take several months to conceive a child. Out of 100 women who want a baby, 15–20 are pregnant within four weeks and 80–90 within a year.

Do you advise talking about the risk of miscarriage during the appointment with the patient?

I think it's important. I notice that especially women who are pregnant for the first time do not want to admit how often miscarriages happen. More than half of all fertilised eggs are miscarried before the sixth week of pregnancy. Most women don't even notice this, however. They interpret the miscarriage as a particularly heavy period. From the fifth week of pregnancy onwards, the miscarriage rate is still ten to 15 percent. It is better for the patients to know these figures.



6. What the man can do

A man's lifestyle can also help to ensure that the wish for a child is fulfilled and that the best conditions are created to allow the foetus to develop healthily. As in the case of the mother, the healthier he lives, the better it is for the child.

It is particularly important to know that any form of overheating of the testicles can lead to a deterioration in sperm cell quality. The Zurich men's health doctor Christian Sigg from the Andrology Centre Zurich therefore advises taking the following steps:

- **Avoid being overweight as well as underweight**
- **Give up smoking because it damages the shape and amount of sperm**
- **Interrupt sitting activities as often as possible**
- **Avoid hot baths and saunas**
- **Activate seat heating in the car only for short periods of time**
- **Do not carry mobile phones in your pocket**
- **Drink no more than three cups of coffee a day**

Like the gynaecologist Lea Köchli in her interview, Christian Sigg also recommends that men take folic acid and zinc because these two substances play a "central role" in the metabolism of sperm cells.

He also recommends eating fruit and vegetables and exercising regularly. This reduces stress and helps create improved hormonal conditions.



Would you like more information about
pregnancy or breastfeeding?

For more detailed information brochures,
ask your doctor
or visit www.andreabal.ch.



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