FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE
FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE
FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE
FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE



THE HOLISTIC GUIDE TO ENTERING *The Pregnancy Portal*

Trimester Zero

trimesterzero.com.au

FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE
FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE
FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE
FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE FREE GUIDE

So, you've decided to create life.

Amazing.

Love that so much for you and the world.



At this point, you're probably wondering where do I even start?

Well, you've come to the right place.

This guide is designed to equip you with the tools you need to step into this journey with awareness, empowerment, and balance. Unlike the typical "just take a prenatal vitamin, and you'll be fine" advice, this is a deep dive into the bigger picture.

Imagine yourself as an onion, like Shrek: we'll peel back layers, revealing ways to tweak and refine your approach to conception, pregnancy, and beyond.

This one's personal

A bit about me for a bit of peace of mind for your journey, let me introduce myself since we've got quite a few pages together.

I'm Kath, a mid-thirties mum of two young boys, a wife, a friend, a doula and here to be a guide on this exciting journey you're either about to head on or are already on.

I want to meet you where you're at.

I also want to highlight the word guide, as you would know there are mountains of information out there clouding the mind with all the things when you're trying to conceive and to be honest... it's hectic.

My purpose and intention for this guide was to pop everything that I've learnt in an accessible space for the masses.

So take as much or as little as you'd like from the following pages and my hope is that you get some value, if so, my job is done.

Here's some of my story:

As a teenager I was put on the contraceptive pill, and years later diagnosed with pill induced Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) now known as Polyendocrine Metabolic Ovarian Syndrome (PMOS). A doctor told me, in the same breath, that having children might be difficult for me. I definitely wasn't ready for kids but in that moment, those words hurt soul deep as I knew that I wanted to have kids one day.

Instead of grief, it sparked obsession (years later I'm realising that my rabbit holes I go down are part of being a Projector in Human Design and definitely undiagnosed ADHD) so when I saw obsession, I really mean it haha.

I wanted to understand, really understand what was happening inside my own body. By a stroke of fate (thank you divine timing from the universe), on the very day I was diagnosed, I had my first ever appointment to see an Acupuncturist. After that session, I knew that a holistic, Eastern approach felt more aligned with my healing journey. I had never experienced a practitioner who cared for me in the way she did, how beautiful is it to feel held? To me, she was a true earth angel (and still is), and more than ten years later, she is still acherished part of my life today.

Through intentional changes to the way I ate, moved, rested, and lived, I reversed my symptoms completely and I noticed almost immediately a drastic difference in my whole being, especially when I cut out sugar, that was wild. The clarity!

Cysts shrank and even disappeared. My cycles eventually changed. And more than anything, I changed. Physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually. I felt as though I had finally come home to myself.

Then, after years of not trying and not preventing, we found out we were pregnant. The same time we'd given up our lease to travel Australia in a van. Something logical said stay but the soul said go, so we went and it was the best decision we ever made. I spent that pregnancy beach hopping, swimming until I felt weightless, listening to birth books while
we drove across the country with our dog Taco. I fell completely in love with the female body and fascinated with its intelligence, its rhythm, its capacity to grow an entire human and still somehow keep going. Here's a hot tip, listen to the empowering Ina May Gaskin audiobooks in the car, then your better half is trapped but they also will learn a lot too.

We decided to settle in Margaret River, Western Australia on the *opposite* side of the country from where we were living, but the place that we were most excited to visit on our road trip around Australia.

My partner and I decided to attend a birth information night hosted by a doula, not really knowing too much about doulas or what they were about. We left the talk completely changed, doula services were all booked up for when I was due but hypnobirthing was available so we went with that. Bare in mind, this was all at the start of covid times, life was starting to get a bit weird and funky.

My first birth didn't unfold the way I'd imagined AT ALL. A low-risk pregnancy ending in a non-elective caesarean
has a way of humbling you, delivered via the sun roof (the surgeons words).

I think now also might be a good time to mention, **no matter how your birth goes you can find light in all of the other aspects of postpartum.** You do not need to let it define you and please don't beat yourself up. Our babies will enter this world however they're meant to and sometimes that's out of our hands and that's ok. Speaking from experience, my birth didn't go to plan but I had an incredible breastfeeding journey, healing and postpartum.

What stayed with me more than the birth was in fact what came after, another earth angel had entered the picture.

Our hypnobirthing teacher had become our unofficial doula, she had organised a meal train with the local community that meant we barely cooked for a month and looked after our dog Taco for the week we were hospital so we could settle in with our son, she also cleaned our entire house while we were away so we came home to a clean home, I was in **awe**.

I had never experienced selflessness like that before, especially not as part of someone's job. Suddenly it hit me, a profound realisation that being truly supported changes ***everything***.

After reflecting on my own birth journey and the support and exceptional care that we experienced after, I knew that I wanted to help others be as prepared as possible and also be an unwavering support to families who need it, especially during such a pivotal time in their lives. This was a career path that I could definitely get around.

I could not imagine what our story would be like if we didn't have that support. I spent the next few years as
a doula myself, absorbing as much knowledge as possible, becoming an advocate for families, holding them and empowering both through life and loss.

I decided the on call life wasn't for me (especially with a toddler of my own) I put my whole energy and heart into those I worked with during those years, it was such a rewarding chapter in my life that I will cherish forever.

Three years later, my second birth was at home. I knew I wanted to experience the complete opposite of what I had the first time. Fast, primal, unmedicated and more powerful than anything I've ever experienced. Our baby was caught by his dad, in the quiet of our own space. After my first experience, that immediate skin-to-skin, uninterrupted, unhurried, cracked me open in the best way. Raw and grounding and deeply, deeply healing.

It was in the months after that the picture became clear - so many women (and also men, let's not forget the fathers) are moving through conception, pregnancy, birth, and postpartum without the information, the tools or the support they *deserve*.

Overwhelmed, disconnected, and quietly wondering if there's a more grounded way through. There is. And it shouldn't be hard to find, and now it's not - yay!

Through lived experience, working alongside others and years of learning. I realised my purpose was to share what I had learned rather than keep it to myself. The path was unclear, but one thing was certain: the wider the reach, the greater the opportunity to serve.

This guide is part one of that purpose and part two is my website/app I created (that's a story for another day). It's called Trimester Zero and it's my third baby.

Trimester Zero acts as a central hub for everyone who wants to understand their body, feel supported in their journey (whatever that may be) and create some beautiful rituals and self-awareness.

This guide, and the app alongside it, are what I wish had existed at the very beginning of my own journey so that's why I've created them for you. Enjoy!

You deserve to feel held through all of it, and you've come to exactly the right place.

Let's jump in.

What's inside

Take as much or as little as you'd like from the pages ahead.

Welcome 2

This One's Personal 3

1. Your Cycle Is Your Superpower 8

2. Why Chronic Stress May Be Silently Delaying Ovulation 11

3. What to Eat, and Why It Matters More Than You Think 14

4. The One Fertility Habit No One Is Talking About !6

5. The Everyday Products Quietly Disrupting Your Hormones 17

6. How to Change What You Pass Forward to Your Child 19

7. Your Brain Is Literally Rewiring: Here's What That Means 20

8. Alternative Practices That Actually Move the Needle on Fertility 22

9. When to Bring in Extra Support and Advocate for Yourself 24

10. Conception Is 50/50: This Half of the Equation Matters Too 25

11. Your Pre-Conception Timeline & Checklist 28

12. The Daily Rituals That Quietly Change Everything 30

Everything in This Guide Is Waiting for You Inside Trimester Zero 32

I. YOUR CYCLE IS YOUR SUPERPOWER

Here's how to use it

Your menstrual cycle is your untapped superpower. Each month, your body moves through four hormonal phases.

Each with its own energy, strengths, and needs. By tuning into these cycles, you can optimise your well-being, fertility, and emotional health. Gosh, I don't know about you but how powerful would it have been if we learnt all of this in school!

The Four Phases

🌹 Menstruation: "Dream Phase"

Days 1–7 · Oestrogen and progesterone are at their lowest. Your body sheds and resets.

What to do: Rest, nurture yourself, reflect. Allow yourself to dream about what you want to grow and what you need to release. Minimise workload and social engagements.

Movement: Gentle stretching, slow walks.

Food: Smoothies, soups, broths, iron- and B-vitamin-rich foods.

🌱 Follicular Phase: "Do Phase"

Days 7–12 · Oestrogen rises, energy lifts, your body is building to ovulate.

What to do: Time for creativity and action. Organise, plan, explore new ideas, and put them into motion.

Movement: New and challenging activities, try pilates or yoga.

Food: Fresh, colourful fruits and vegetables, lean protein, whole grains.

Ovulation: “Give Phase”

Days 13–16 · A hormone called LH (luteinising hormone, the one ovulation predictor kits detect) surges, signalling your ovary to release an egg. This is your fertile window, the only time in your cycle when pregnancy is possible. Sperm can survive inside the body for up to five days, so the few days leading up to this moment matter too.

What to do: Energy is high! Connect, socialise, turn ideas into action. But don’t give all your energy away!
For conception: Track your cervical mucus and your BBT (basal body temperature), meaning your resting temperature taken first thing each morning with a thermometer under the tongue before you move, eat, or reach for your phone. It rises slightly after ovulation due to the hormone progesterone, and tracking it daily helps you see your cycle’s pattern
over time.
Track your cervical mucus, the discharge your cervix produces which changes texture throughout your cycle. Around ovulation it becomes clear, slippery, and stretchy, a bit like raw egg white (yes, really, and yes, it’s one of the most reliable fertility signs you have).
Movement: High-impact activities, group classes.
Food: Lightly cooked veggies, fibre-rich meals, moderate carbs.

Luteal Phase: “Take Phase”

Days 17–28 · Progesterone rises. Your body prepares: for pregnancy or for shedding.

What to do: Go inward, set boundaries, focus on self-care and fine-tune intuition.

Nest and prepare.

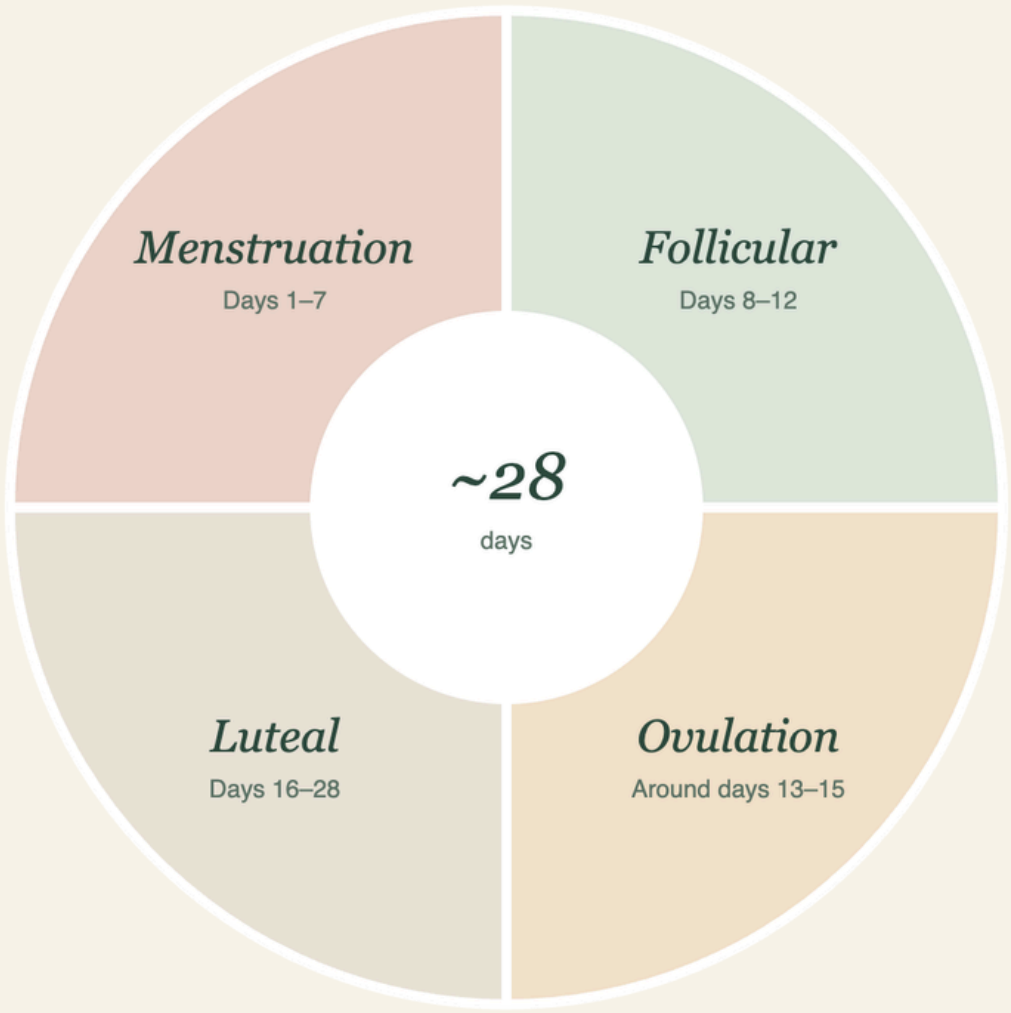
Movement: Dance, jogging.

Food: Warm cooked meals, complex carbs, healthy fats, leafy greens.

Bonus: *Track your cycle using Trimester Zero.*
Log your BBT, cervical mucus, moods, and energy each day. Not every cycle is 28 days and that’s completely normal and okay. Life happens! Your cycle can change length depending on various factors, some of these include diet, stress levels and lifestyle. Understanding your own rhythm and beginning to form self-awareness is the goal.

Your menstrual cycle

- Four phases · each with its own energy ,strengths and needs



🌐 Menstruation: “Dream Phase”

Energy: ***Low.*** Rest, nurture, reflect, dream.
Movement: Gentle stretching, slow walks.
Nourish: Smoothies, soups, iron-rich foods.

🌱 Follicular: “Do Phase”

Energy: ***Rising.*** Oestrogen climbs, create, plan.
Movement: Pilates, yoga, try something new.
Nourish: Fresh colourful veg, lean protein, grains.

💃 Ovulation: “Give Phase”

Energy: Peak. LH surges, egg released, fertile window.
Movement: High-impact, group classes, go for it.
Nourish: Lightly cooked veg, fibre-rich, moderate carbs.

🌘 Luteal: “Take Phase”

Energy: ***Waning.*** Progesterone rises, go inward, nest.
Movement: Dance, jogging, rhythmic, grounding.
Nourish: Warm cooked meals, complex carbs, leafy greens.

Not every cycle is 28 days. Understanding your own rhythm is the goal. ·

2. WHY CHRONIC STRESS MAY BE SILENTLY DELAYING OVULATION

Here's something most fertility content glosses over: ***your body will not prioritise conception if it thinks you're in danger. That's not a mindset problem, it's biology.***

When you're chronically stressed, your brain signals the adrenal glands to pump out cortisol. This redirects blood flow and primes your muscles to respond but your reproductive system gets deprioritised. Cortisol suppresses the release of GnRH (gonadotropin-releasing hormone, quite a mouthful, but think of it as the starting gun your brain fires to kick off the entire ovulation process). Without GnRH, the pituitary gland can't produce LH (luteinising hormone, which triggers egg release) and FSH (follicle-stimulating hormone, which helps eggs mature in the first place) and without adequate LH, ovulation is delayed or skipped entirely.

Stress hormones like cortisol can also affect the developing baby's brain, especially in early pregnancy when 25,000 neurons are produced every minute (Dr. Thomas Verny). This is not about blaming stress, or yourself. It's about understanding the mechanism because once you do, nervous system regulation stops feeling like self-indulgent wellness advice and starts feeling like essential fertility work.

What regulation actually looks like

The goal isn't to eliminate stress, that's not realistic. The goal is to spend more time in your parasympathetic state which is your body's "rest, digest, and restore" mode, when you're calm, digesting well, sleeping properly, and your reproductive hormones are free to do their thing and less time in sympathetic overdrive, the "fight, flight, or freeze" response that is extremely useful if you're running from a bear, but less useful when it's just… Tuesday.

> **Box Breathing: your fastest tool** Inhale for 4 counts. Hold for 4. Exhale for 4. Hold for 4.
> Repeat 5 rounds.
> This directly activates the vagus nerve, the longest nerve in your body, running from your brain all the way through your chest and abdomen. Think of it as the main cable of your body's "calm down" system. Stimulate it, and your nervous system shifts within minutes. Use it before bed, before a difficult conversation, or any time you feel your body brace.

Other helpful but *easy* tools

•**Daily meditation:** even 5–10 minutes creates measurable change in cortisol. You do not need an hour. Even putting on a favourite song and getting lost in the music counts.
•**Walks in nature:** not to exercise, to regulate. Soft focus (trees, water, sky) genuinely calms the nervous system, the art of noticing.
•**Grounding:** bare feet on earth. Emerging research links this to reduced inflammation and cortisol modulation.

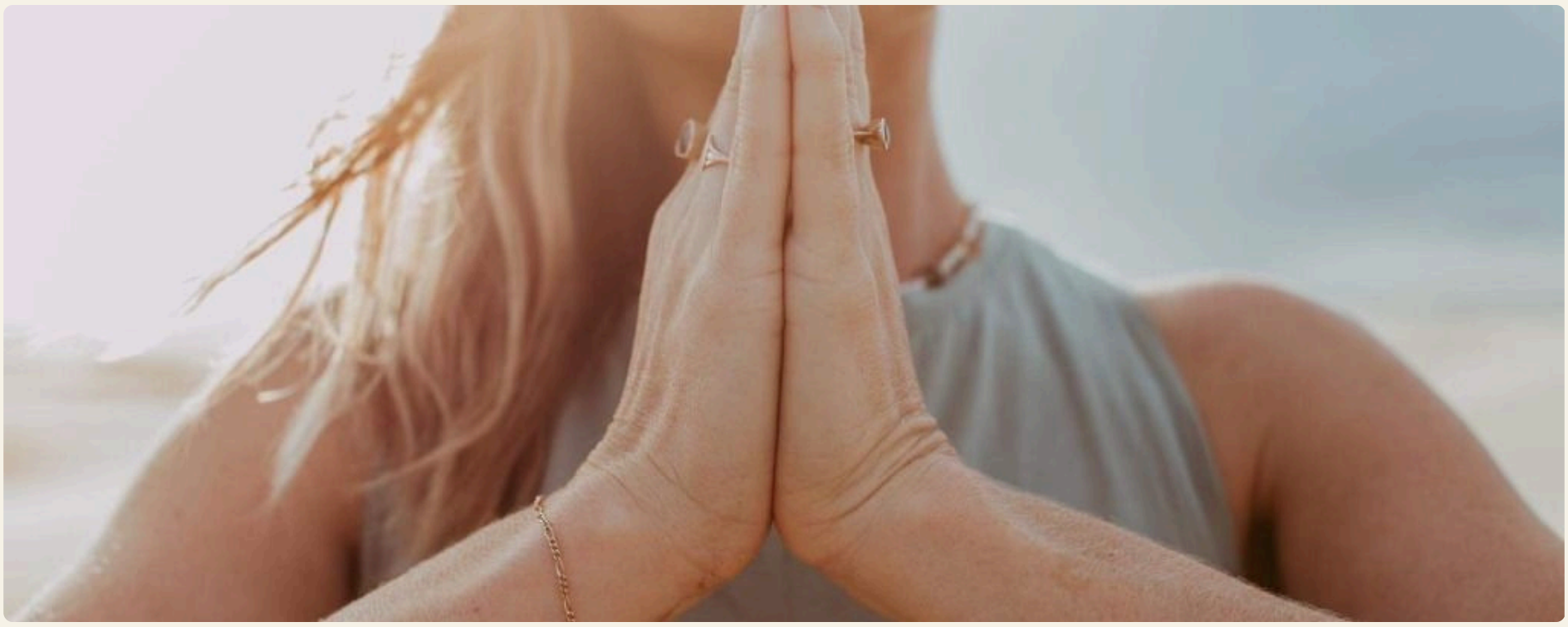
•**Digital boundaries:** especially social media, which keeps the threat-detection system on high alert.
•**Partner communication:** ensure both of you are mentally and emotionally prepared for this journey.

The partner piece

Research on co-regulation (the way our nervous systems literally sync with the people closest to us) shows that two nervous systems in close proximity genuinely influence each other.

When one of you is calm, it has a measurable calming effect on the other. Your relationship isn't just emotional support, it's also physiology: the quality of safety, ease, and connection in your relationship directly affects your hormonal environment.

Build rituals of genuine connection: a daily check-in, physical touch, a walk together. It has a physiological effect on both of you.



🚶‍♀️ Your nervous system practice starts today.

Inside Trimester Zero, guided box breathing and somatic practices are built into your daily rhythm, not as extras to remember, but as part of how the app walks you through each day. Your first session is waiting.

Try it free for 14 days →

3. WHAT TO EAT, AND WHY IT MATTERS MORE THAN YOU THINK

Food is information.

Every meal you eat sends signals to your hormones, your egg quality, your gut microbiome, and ultimately the environment in which your baby will develop. *This isn't about perfection or restriction*, it's about building a nutrient-dense foundation that your body can draw from for you and your baby.

Key Nutrients for Conception

Folate (not folic acid): Folate is the naturally occurring form found in food. Folic acid is the synthetic version used in most standard supplements, a significant number of us carry a common genetic variation called MTHFR (and yes, at first glance it definitely looks like scientists were trying to sneak a swear word into a medical textbook) that makes it harder to convert folic acid into the active form the body can actually use. It is recommended to look for folate rather than synthetic folic acid on labels. Choosing naturally occurring forms where possible is more beneficial for both mother and baby, while helping to reduce exposure to synthetic substances during pregnancy.
Folate can be found in dark leafy greens (spinach, kale, silverbeet), legumes, asparagus, avocado, and eggs.
Critical for neural tube development from the moment of conception.

Iron: Essential for ovulation, healthy menstrual cycles, and building the blood supply that will nourish your baby.
Iron can be found in red meat, organ meats like liver and heart, lentils, pumpkin seeds, and spinach. Liver and heart are especially rich in highly absorbable heme iron, along with key nutrients like vitamin A, B vitamins, and copper that support energy production, healthy blood formation, and fetal development. Pair plant-based iron sources with vitamin C to help improve absorption.

Iodine: Crucial for thyroid function and fetal brain development.
Found in seaweed, eggs, dairy, and white fish. Often under-consumed, check your prenatal includes iodine.

Vitamin D: Supports immune function, hormone balance, and mood. Most of us are deficient, especially in winter. Get levels tested.
Sunlight, fatty fish, egg yolks are great sources of vitamin D.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids (DHA/EPA): Critical for baby's brain and eye development, and for reducing inflammation.
Oily fish 2–3x per week (salmon, sardines, mackerel) or a quality algae-based omega-3 supplement like Irish Sea Moss.

Zinc: Supports ovulation, hormone production, and immune function.
Oysters, beef, pumpkin seeds, and chickpeas are great sources of zinc.

Choline: Works alongside folate to prevent neural tube defects and supports brain development.
Helpful sources of choline include eggs (especially yolks), liver, and salmon.

I know what you're thinking, keeping track of all these foods and nutrients can start to feel less like meal planning and more like a full-time admin role... which is not ideal when you're already busy growing a human.

That's where quality supplementation can really help. Foraged For You's Mother's Blend is a wonderful example of a wholefood-based option designed to support pre-conception, pregnancy, and postpartum, with certified organic, nutrient-dense ingredients like grass-fed liver and spleen, kelp, camu camu, and fermented greens to help cover nutritional gaps and make daily nourishment feel simple without needing a spreadsheet for every meal. If you're not sure where to start, a Naturopath, Nutritionist, Acupuncturist etc are a wonderful support to help you get started and a personalised approach for your journey.

Blood Sugar Balance

Insulin resistance is when your cells stop responding efficiently to insulin, the hormone responsible for moving sugar from your blood into your cells for energy and blood sugar dysregulation more broadly, are among the most under-appreciated factors in hormonal health and fertility. When blood sugar spikes and crashes repeatedly (hello, refined carbs and skipped meals), your body floods the system with extra insulin to compensate, and that excess insulin then disrupts the delicate hormonal cascade needed for regular ovulation.

- Build every meal around protein, healthy fat, and fibre.
- Reduce ultra-processed foods, refined carbohydrates, and added sugars. Eat within an hour of waking to stabilise morning cortisol.
- Don't skip meals - consistent nourishment supports hormonal rhythm.

What to Reduce and look out for

- Alcohol: moderate consumption affects hormone balance, egg quality, and implantation.
- Caffeine: moderate intake (1 coffee per day) is generally considered low-risk, but excess caffeine is linked to reduced fertility. Begin winding down gradually... you're only human!
- Ultra-processed foods: these displace nutrient-dense options and drive inflammation.
- Seed oils: high in omega-6 (sunflower, canola, soybean) - can contribute to systemic inflammation when consumed in excess.

A Note on Supplements: *Food first, always.* A nutrient-dense diet is your foundation - supplements fill specific gaps, they don't replace real food.

Core pre-conception supplements to consider: a quality prenatal with folate (not folic acid), iodine, vitamin D3 (test levels first), and omega-3s.

Add CoQ10 (coenzyme Q10 - a naturally occurring antioxidant that powers the energy production happening inside your cells, including those involved in maturing your eggs). Your body produces less of it with age, which is why it becomes particularly relevant from your mid-thirties.

Always discuss with your healthcare provider before starting new supplements and recommended dosage.

4. THE ONE FERTILITY HABIT THAT NOONE IS TALKING ABOUT

Why Sleep Matters for Fertility

Sleep is when your body restores, regulates, and rebalances. It is not a passive state, it's when critical hormonal processes happen. Yet it's almost entirely absent from most fertility conversations.

- **Melatonin:** the hormone your brain's pineal gland releases in darkness to signal "time to sleep" is also a powerful antioxidant that protects egg quality. This is why the blue light from screens before bed matters: it directly suppresses melatonin production, which means the doom scrolling in bed isn't just keeping your mind busy, it's interfering with a key fertility-protective hormone.

Try an experiment of leaving your phone outside of the bedroom and on aeroplane mode from the early evening until the next morning and see how you feel! You have nothing to lose.

- **Growth hormone:** released primarily during deep sleep, supports follicle development (the maturation of the tiny fluid-filled sacs in your ovaries, each of which contains a developing egg) and cellular repair throughout the body. You can't supplement your way to this one. It requires actual sleep.
- **Cortisol regulation:** chronic poor sleep keeps cortisol elevated, which (as covered in Section 2) directly suppresses reproductive hormones.
- **LH and FSH:** the hormones that trigger and support ovulation (covered in Section 2) are released in pulsatile rhythms, meaning they pulse at precise intervals throughout the day and night. Poor sleep disrupts the timing and amplitude of those pulses. It's subtle but cumulative.
- **For partners:** testosterone production peaks during sleep. Poor sleep measurably reduces testosterone and sperm quality within days.

What Good Sleep Actually Looks Like

- Keep consistent sleep and wake times, even on weekends *(if you can)*. This anchors your circadian rhythm (your body's internal 24-hour clock) that regulates not just sleep, but hormone release, metabolism, body temperature, and energy levels. Think of it as the master schedule everything else runs on. Mess with the schedule often enough, and the hormones eventually notice. Make exceptions when you need to celebrate life and have plans but try your best in this phase to head to bed around the same time.
- Avoid screens 60 minutes before bed, blue light suppresses melatonin production.
- Keep your room cool and dark, your body needs to drop in temperature to enter deep sleep.
- Avoid eating within 2–3 hours of bed, digestion competes with repair.
- Magnesium foot soak or bath before bed promotes relaxation and deeper sleep.
- If you wake between 2–4am regularly, this is often a liver or blood sugar signal and is worth exploring with your practitioner.

> 🌙 Trimester Zero's evening ritual prompts include a cycle log and a wind-down check-in - two minutes that help close the day with intention and signal to your body that it's time to rest.

5. THE EVERYDAY PRODUCTS QUIETLY DISRUPTING YOUR HORMONES

- Your body is in constant conversation with your environment. Many everyday products from skincare to cookware to cleaning supplies contain chemicals that mimic or disrupt your hormones. These are called endocrine disruptors. Your endocrine system is simply your body's hormone system, the network of glands and organs that produce, release, and regulate every hormone you have. Endocrine disruptors are chemicals that mimic, block, or interfere with those hormone signals. Even small, repeated exposures can have a cumulative effect on hormonal balance, egg quality, and fertility over time.

- **The good news:** you don't need to overhaul everything at once. Small, strategic swaps made consistently over the months before conception make a real difference because you are building the environment yourbaby will first inhabit.

The Main Offenders

- **Parabens & phthalates:** Parabens are preservatives used to extend the shelf life of skincare and cosmetics. You'll find them on ingredient labels listed as methylparaben, propylparaben, or ethylparaben) and phthalates (chemicals that make plastics more flexible and help fragrances last longer, often hidden under the catch-all word "fragrance" in ingredient lists) both weakly mimic oestrogen in the body, and can disrupt hormonal balance. Luckily now there are so many wonderful low-tox alternatives available.
- **BPA (bisphenol A):** a chemical used to make hard, clear plastics and the inner lining of some tin cans. It mimics oestrogen and is one of the most studied endocrine disruptors going. Heat accelerates leaching, which means reheating food in plastic containers or leaving a plastic water bottle in a hot car is worth avoiding. Note: "BPA-free" isn't a complete safety guarantee, some replacement chemicals (BPS, BPF) may have similar effects which is why glass and stainless steel remain the safest options!
- **Non-stick cookware (PFAS/Teflon)**: Non-stick cookware coated with PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, a family of synthetic chemicals sometimes called "forever chemicals" because they don't break down easily in the environment or in the body) or Teflon: when scratched or overheated, these coatings can release compounds linked to hormonal disruption and reduced fertility. Cast iron, stainless steel, or ceramic are solid and long-lasting alternatives.
- **Fragrance / perfume:** a catch-all term in ingredient lists that can contain dozens of undisclosed chemicals. Opt for fragrance-free or products scented with pure essential oils.

- **Pesticide residue on produce:** Prioritise organic for the "Dirty Dozen", a list published each year by the Environmental Working Group (EWG) of the 12 types of fresh produce carrying the highest pesticide residue. It typically includes strawberries, spinach, apples, grapes, peaches, and cherries. Focusing your organic budget here is a targeted and cost-effective strategy, you don't need to buy everything organic to make a meaningful difference.

If buying all of the Dirty Dozen isn't realistic right now, that's completely okay and also understandable with the cost of living at the moment. Buy organic where you can. Either way, it's a good idea to wash your fruit and vegetables after purchasing them. Soaking them in a simple bicarb and water solution for around 5-10 minutes, then rinsing can help reduce pesticide residue before eating. Definitely do a quick search on soaking times, as different produce needs different treatment. Berries, for example, are more delicate and don't need to soak as long, even though they tend to absorb the most pesticides.

- **Conventional cleaning products:** many contain VOCs (volatile organic compounds, gases released from liquids and solids at room temperature, responsible for that sharp chemical smell in many cleaning products). Indoor VOC levels can be significantly higher than outdoor levels, and some are linked to hormonal disruption and respiratory issues. Swap to plant-based or make your own with white vinegar, bicarb, and essential oils. Easy peasy**!**

A Great Place to Start

A useful rule: swap products as they run out, starting with what stays on your skin longest (moisturiser, deodorant, makeup). These have the highest absorption potential, I'm talking 1-5 minutes to absorb into the skin, that's wild. Rinse-off products like shampoo are lower priority.

Small swaps are easier with a plan.

The Trimester Zero app tracks your daily foundations and keeps your pre-conception priorities visible so nothing slips through the cracks. Cycle logging, wellness check-ins, and daily alignment, all in one place.

Start your free trial →

6. HOW TO CHANGE WHAT YOU PASS FORWARD TO YOUR CHILD

Epigenetics is the most magical, incredible beautiful reminder that we are more than our genetic inheritance. While DNA provides the framework, our daily choices and environment influence how those genes are expressed. If DNA is the piano, then lifestyle is the pianist shaping the music through every key that is played.
Your thoughts, nutrition, movement, and stress levels all impact not only your pregnancy but also your baby's future health.

Healing & Self-Love for Generational Impact

Practices like:

- journalling
- somatic therapy (body-based therapy that works with physical sensation, movement, and breath to process emotions, rather than only talking about them; you also notice where they live in the body and work to release them from there)
- breathwork (intentional breathing exercises used for stress reduction, nervous system regulation, and emotional processing) can help you work through what you're carrying and step into this next chapter a little lighter.
- yoga
- qi gong
- acupuncture
- mantra/chanting

Trauma and emotions are stored within the hips and pelvic space. Releasing them through movement, therapy, and self-care creates space for a new spirit to enter. Take a moment to soak that one in, having awareness of this is SO POWERFUL when you do enter the birth space.

Have you ever heard the saying "loose lips, loose hips" ?

A hot tip: if you're stalling through labour - go primal! Use your voice, exactly what our ancestors would have done and what every pregnant mama should have awareness around for when they're in the thick of labour and need to move things along. Gentle fluttering of your lips, a massive sigh, being vocal can provide space in the hips for your baby to come through.

Navigating the Emotional Terrain

The pre-conception season can surface grief, fear, anxiety, and frustration - especially for those who have experienced pregnancy loss, a long road to conceiving, or complicated feelings about becoming a parent. These emotions are not obstacles to the journey. They are part of it.

If you're carrying grief from a previous loss, give it space. Unacknowledged grief doesn't go away - it shows up in the body. A somatic therapist, counsellor, or grief-aware practitioner can offer real support. Anxiety about the two-week wait, about test results, about whether it will "work" - is incredibly common and incredibly exhausting. Nervous system practices (Section 2) are your anchor here.

A note to remember, be gentle with yourself: this path isn't always linear. Grief, fear, and frustration are part of it too. Whatever you're feeling right now is valid and it belongs in this space as much as the hope does.

7. YOUR BRAIN IS LITERALLY REWIRING: HERE'S WHAT THAT MEANS

Pregnancy doesn't just change your body. It changes your brain. Measurably, structurally, and in ways that last years beyond birth. Understanding what's actually happening can shift how you experience it: less "what is wrong with me" and more "my brain is doing something extraordinary."

The gray matter shift

A landmark 2017 study published in Nature Neuroscience (Hoekzema et al.) found that pregnancy causes significant reductions in gray matter volume. Gray matter being the brain tissue containing nerve cell bodies, responsible for processing information, memory, emotion, and decision-making in specific regions of the brain. These changes persist for at least two years after birth.

Before you panic: this is not damage...It's pruning. The same efficient restructuring that happens in adolescence, your brain stripping back what it doesn't need and sharpening what it does. The regions that change most are those involved in social cognition, empathy, and reading other people's emotions and intentions. In other words, your brain is literally optimising itself to attune to another human being. The researchers found that the degree of change directly correlated with the strength of maternal attachment: the more the brain changed, the stronger the bond.

"Mum brain" is real, and it's adaptive

The forgetfulness, the word-finding lapses, the sense that your mind is elsewhere, these are real, and they're not random. Your brain is actively deprioritising certain cognitive functions, things like verbal memory and task-switching to redirect resources toward vigilance, emotional attunement, and threat detection for your baby. You're not losing capacity. You're being reorganised. Think of it less like brain fog and more like a *reprioritisation*. Your brain is doing exactly what it's supposed to do.

Matrescence: the identity shift nobody talks about

The term *matrescence* was coined by anthropologist Dana Raphael and brought into mainstream conversation by Dr. Alexandra Sacks. It describes the psychological and identity transformation of becoming a mother, a process as profound as adolescence, yet almost entirely absent from prenatal care conversations.

Just as a teenager's brain restructures while their identity expands and reshapes, so does a mother's. The ambivalence, the disorientation, the sense of not quite recognising yourself, these are neurological as much as they are emotional. They are not signs that something is wrong. They are signs that something significant is underway. Knowing this doesn't make the transition effortless. But it changes what you make it mean.

The intuition upgrade

The limbic system, the deep, ancient part of the brain responsible for emotion, memory, instinct, and gut responses (think of it as the part that reacts before your logical mind has a chance to catch up) becomes more active and more sensitive during pregnancy. Oxytocin, often called the "bonding hormone," released during physical touch, connection, and breastfeeding, is already rising during pregnancy.

It enhances social bonding and your capacity to read other people's emotions and intentions, which is exactly what it sounds like: your brain preparing you for a relationship with another human being. Many women describe a sharpening of gut instinct during this time: a heightened ability to read rooms, people, and situations. This isn't woo. It's neuroscience. Your brain is preparing you to read a human who cannot yet speak.

Nourish your brain

The brain changes of pregnancy are supported or undermined by what you feed it.

Omega-3s (DHA especially) are the structural building blocks of brain cell membranes for you and your baby. Sources: salmon, sardines, walnuts, flaxseeds, and algae supplements.

Choline works alongside DHA for fetal brain development and is found in egg yolks, liver, and salmon.

Hydration matters more than most people realise, even mild dehydration measurably affects mood, focus, and cognitive function.

Stress regulation (Section 2) is brain care: chronically elevated cortisol impairs neuroplasticity (your brain's remarkable ability to reorganise itself, build new connections, and adapt in response to experience) and disrupts the very structural changes pregnancy is actively trying to make.

8. ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES THAT ACTUALLY MOVE THE NEEDLE ON FERTILITY

Using alternative healing modalities like Acupuncture, Qi Gong, and others for pre-conception can help balance hormones, reduce stress, improve circulation, and optimise reproductive health for both partners. I want to also preface that using these modalities in everyday life can be so so nourishing for our nervous systems and reaching homeostasis.

Acupuncture

- **Supports hormonal balance and cycle regulation.** By stimulating specific points along the body's meridians, acupuncture is thought to influence the hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian axis which is the communication pathway that governs ovulation timing and hormone rhythm. This is why many practitioners recommend it for cycles that run irregular or unpredictable.
- **Increases blood flow to the reproductive organs.** Needling can trigger a local vasodilation response, encouraging circulation to the uterus and ovaries. Better blood flow means better oxygen and nutrient delivery to developing follicles and the uterine lining — the foundation both eggs and embryos rely on.
- **Calms the nervous system and lowers cortisol.** Chronic stress keeps the body in a sympathetic "fight or flight" state, which can suppress reproductive hormone signaling. Acupuncture activates the parasympathetic nervous system, helping shift the body into the calmer state where conception is more likely to happen.
- **Builds a thicker, more receptive uterine lining.** A well-vascularised endometrium is one of the key factors in successful implantation. Regular sessions in the lead-up to ovulation are often timed specifically to support lining thickness during the implantation window.
- **Benefits male fertility too** 😊 Research suggests acupuncture may improve sperm quality, motility, and morphology, likely through similar circulation and stress-reduction pathways. A gentle reminder again that preconception care isn't a solo journey.

A gentle note: Acupuncture is generally considered a complementary practice rather than a substitute for medical fertility care, it pairs well alongside diet, nervous system regulation, and (when needed) clinical suppor

Herbal Medicine (TCM)

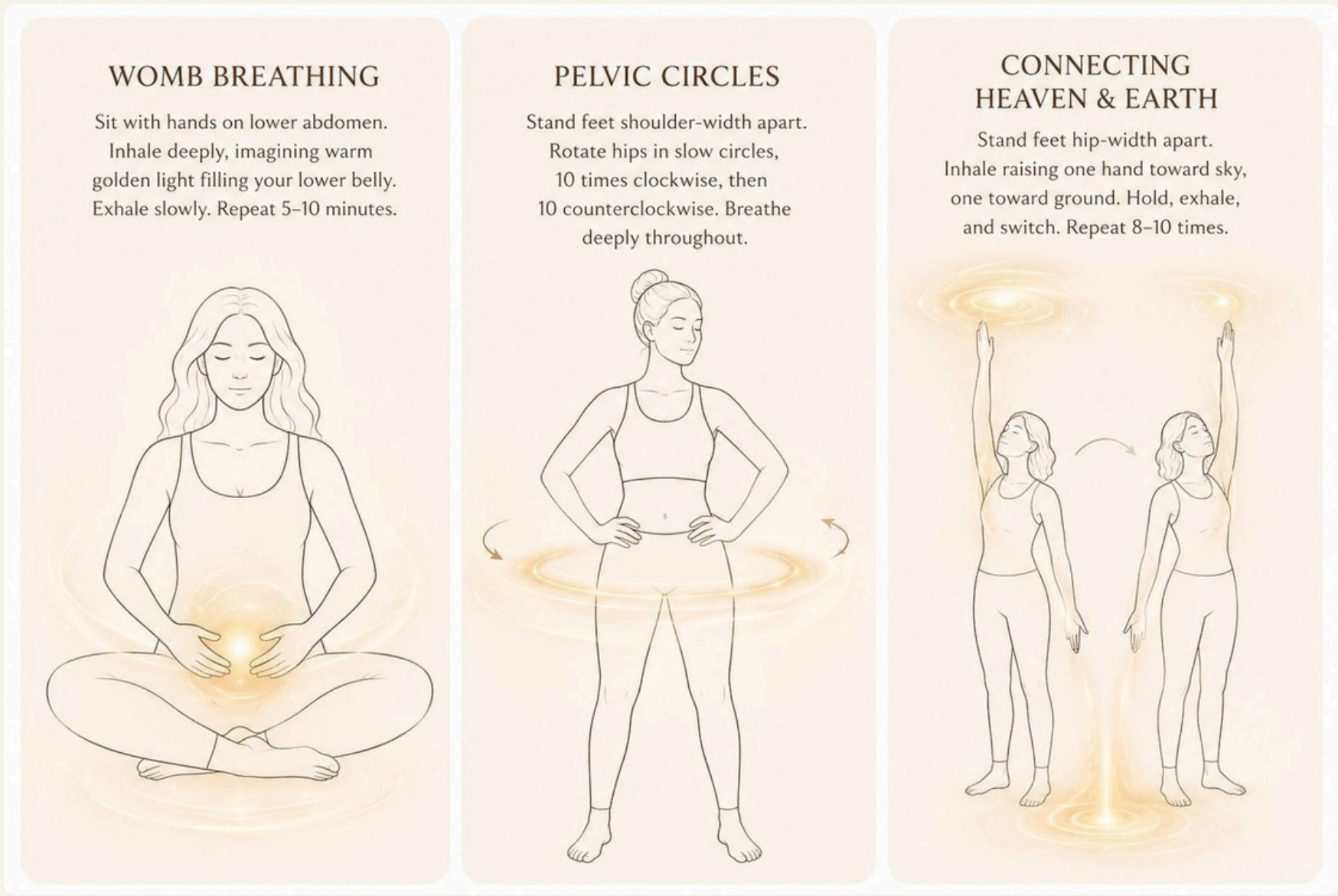
Customised herbal formulas support reproductive health by nourishing kidney energy, regulating hormonal imbalances, and improving blood circulation.

⚠ Always work with a licensed TCM practitioner. Never self-prescribe herbal formulas during pre- conception or pregnancy: some herbs are contraindicated and can affect hormone levels or early pregnancy.

Qi Gong (pronounced "chee gong")

"Qi" means life energy or vital force; "Gong" means cultivation or practice. Qi Gong is a meditative movement practice rooted in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) — a system developed in China over thousands of years that encompasses acupuncture, herbal medicine, movement, and dietary principles. Rather than treating symptoms in isolation, TCM views the body as an interconnected system of energy, working to restore balance across the whole person. For fertility, that means supporting not just the reproductive organs but the circulation, breath, and nervous system that surround them.

- **Womb Breathing:** for warming and awakening the reproductive space. Sit comfortably with your hands resting on your lower abdomen. Inhale deeply, imagining warm golden light filling your lower belly with each breath. Exhale slowly, letting your hands sense the rise and fall. Continue for 5–10 minutes. This practice is thought to direct qi and blood flow toward the uterus and ovaries while anchoring your attention in the body. A simple way to shift out of a stressed, "thinking" state and into a receptive one.
- **Pelvic Circles:** for releasing tension and encouraging circulation. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. Rotate your hips in slow, deliberate circles 10 times clockwise, then 10 counterclockwise, breathing deeply throughout. The gentle, rhythmic movement is believed to loosen tension held in the pelvis and hips, improving blood flow to the reproductive organs in a way that stillness alone can't.
- **Connecting Heaven & Earth:** for balancing the body's energy pathways. Stand with your feet hip-width apart. As you inhale, raise one hand toward the sky and lower the other toward the ground, holding the stretch. As you exhale, switch sides. Repeat 8–10 times. In TCM, this movement is said to draw energy along the body's vertical meridians, harmonising the upper and lower body, a grounding close to any Qi Gong practice.





9. WHEN TO BRING IN EXTRA SUPPORT AND WHEN TO ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF

This guide is a holistic companion, not a substitute for professional medical care. One of the most empowering things you can do in your pre-conception season is to get a clear picture of your baseline health before you start trying. Knowledge is power and doesn’t have to lead to anxiety, it can be really empowering.

A full hormonal panel is a blood test that measures your key reproductive hormones including oestrogen, progesterone, LH, FSH, and often AMH (which gives an indication of your ovarian reserve, essentially, how many eggs are left in the tank). These aren't always run by default, so it helps to ask specifically.

Here a few that you should look into but definitely discuss with your practitioner and meet yourself where you’re at.

Thyroid function: your thyroid is a small butterfly-shaped gland in your neck that regulates metabolism, energy, mood, and your overall hormonal environment. Both an underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism) and an overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism) can disrupt your cycle, affect ovulation, and go undiagnosed for a surprisingly long time. A simple blood test picks it up and it's absolutely worth asking for.
Iron studies and ferritin: most people know about iron, but ferritin is the protein that actually stores it in your body. Here's the catch, you can have a technically "normal" iron level while your ferritin stores are already depleted, meaning your body has been quietly running on empty for a while. Low ferritin is extremely common, can affect ovulation and energy, and often shows up as hair shedding long before it registers as anaemia. Ask for both.

Know When It Might Be Time for Extra Support

Sometimes, having a little extra support or guidance can make the journey feel clearer and less overwhelming, reaching out for support isn’t a sign that something is wrong, it can simply offer deeper insight, reassurance, and a more supported path forward.

10. CONCEPTION IS 50/50: THIS HALF OF THE EQUATION MATTERS TOO



Almost every fertility guide is written entirely for the woman. Which makes sense on one level: your body carries the pregnancy, your cycle is the primary clock, your nutrition is the most discussed variable.

Conception is, biologically, an equal collaboration. Male factor is involved in roughly half of all fertility challenges, and yet it's routinely under-screened and under-discussed, often until months of optimising the female side have passed
If you have a partner in this journey, this section is for both of you. Share it. Read it together. This isn't a checklist to hand over, it's an invitation to make this a shared practice from the beginning.

The 74-day window and why it matters

Sperm take approximately 74 days to fully develop. A process called spermatogenesis (sperm production, in plain English). What this means practically: the lifestyle choices your partner makes today will show up directly in their sperm quality roughly three months from now.

This is actually empowering information. It means there's a clear, defined window for meaningful change and unlike egg quality, which accumulates over years, sperm quality can shift relatively quickly in response to nutrition, sleep, stress, and environment. The body is remarkably responsive when given the right conditions.

What sperm health actually needs

The same foundations that support your hormonal health support *his*: whole food nutrition, quality sleep, nervous system regulation, and a reduced toxic load.

A few specifics worth knowing:

Zinc and selenium directly support sperm production and motility. Great natural sources are oysters, pumpkin seeds, brazil nuts, and red meat. These are worth building into regular meals rather than relying on supplements alone.
Omega-3 fatty acids support the structural integrity of sperm cell membranes. Oily fish three times a week (salmon, sardines, mackerel) or a quality fish oil or oyster supplement covers this well.
CoQ10 supports energy production within sperm cells, particularly relevant from the mid-thirties onward.
Vitamins C and E are antioxidants that protect sperm DNA from oxidative damage, the kind that can accumulate from poor diet, alcohol, smoking, and chronic stress. Found in colourful vegetables, citrus, nuts, and seeds.
Heat is worth paying attention to. Sperm production is temperature-sensitive, which is why the testes sit outside the body. Laptops rested on the lap, frequent hot baths, and regular sauna use can all reduce sperm quality during active conception attempts. Simple awareness here makes a real difference.
Alcohol and smoking both reduce sperm count, motility (how well sperm swim and move forward, essentially, their navigation ability), and morphology (the size and shape of sperm cells, because apparently even sperm have a dress code). A meaningful reduction, not necessarily elimination, over three months creates measurable improvement. The 74-day window is the frame: what changes now shows up in three months.



The nervous system connection

The same HPA axis disruption covered in Section 2, the chain of communication between the brain and adrenal glands that produces cortisol under stress, applies equally to male fertility. Elevated cortisol affects testosterone production and sperm quality in men just as it disrupts ovulation in women. This isn't often talked about in male fertility conversations, but it's well-established in the research.

Nervous system regulation isn't just your work to do. Box breathing, nature walks, quality sleep, genuine connection, these practices matter for both of you and doing them together compounds the benefit through co-regulation (two nervous systems in close proximity genuinely influence each other, as covered in Section 2).

The single most impactful step

Before overhauling the supplement stack, before eliminating every vice, the most useful thing a male partner can do is get a semen analysis, a simple lab test measuring sperm count (how many), motility (how well they swim), and morphology (their size and shape). It is straightforward, relatively inexpensive, and provides actual data rather than assumption. Most GPs can refer for one, or it can be done privately with a quick turnaround. Many couples spend months, sometimes much longer, focused entirely on the female side of the equation, only to discover a male factor that could have been identified and addressed much earlier.

A semen analysis isn't a verdict. It's information, and information is always better than uncertainty when you're trying to make decisions.

The emotional terrain of partnership

This journey has a way of landing differently for each partner at different times, in different ways, with different fears sitting underneath. One of you might feel urgency while the other feels calm. One might grieve quietly while the other problem-solves. Neither response is wrong. *Both are valid*. And the gap between them, when unspoken, can quietly create distance and at times resentment at exactly the moment when closeness matters most.

Creating space for honest, unhurried conversations, not about logistics, but about how each of you is actually feeling, strengthens both your relationship and your collective nervous systems. You don't need to be in the same emotional place at the same time. You just need to be willing to stay curious about where the other person is.

You are a team. Not a project manager and a participant, but a team. That dynamic and the quality of safety, ease, and mutual support between you creates a hormonal environment in both your bodies that no supplement can replicate.

11. The Pre-Conception Checklist

A calm, clear path forward month by month

Preparation is one of the most loving things you can do for your future baby and for yourself. Start where you are. This timeline gives you a clear, calm path forward without the overwhelm.

6 Months Out

Laying the foundation

- ☐ Start tracking your cycle with Trimester Zero.
- ☐ Book a pre-conception check with your Healthcare Professional: request a full hormonal and nutritional panel.
- ☐ Begin a quality prenatal with folate (not folic acid) and iodine.
- ☐ Start acupuncture if drawn to it. Three months minimum for real results.
- ☐ Both partners: reduce alcohol, increase sleep, begin daily stress practices.
- ☐ Audit your home and personal care products. Start swapping to low-tox alternatives.
- ☐ Begin building your nutrition foundation: protein, healthy fats, colourful vegetables at every meal. Eat the rainbow!
- ☐ Deepen your nervous system practice: daily breathwork, regular nature walks.

3 Months Out

Nourishing egg, sperm and spirit

- ☐ Add CoQ10 (200–400mg daily) for egg quality and sperm motility.
- ☐ Confirm your vitamin D level and adjust supplementation accordingly.
- ☐ Begin somatic, journalling or talk therapy if carrying unprocessed stress, grief, or anxiety.
- ☐ Partner: zinc, selenium, omega-3s, and CoQ10 for sperm health. Encourage a semen analysis.

□ Establish consistent sleep and wake times to support hormonal balance and nervous system regulation.

Bonus ritual: aim to get natural sunlight in your eyes at both sunrise and sunset where possible. This helps regulate your circadian rhythm, which plays a key role in hormone production, energy levels, mood, metabolism, stress resilience, and deeper, more restorative sleep. It's also a lush ritual to start creating for yourself!

1 Month Out

Slowing down and tuning in

- ☐ Know your fertile window intimately: cervical mucus + BBT + Trimester Zero app together.
- ☐ Wind down caffeine gradually.
- ☐ Establish your daily ritual (see Section 12).
- ☐ Create emotional space. This is a time to slow down, not speed up.

Now

Trust your body, it holds deep wisdom and an incredible capacity to heal, adapt, and create life.

Trust the process. Conception journeys rarely unfold in a perfectly linear way, but every step is offering information, growth, and preparation.

Ask for support when you need it, you are not meant to navigate this journey alone, and receiving support is a strength, not a weakness.

Remember: you don't have to piece everything together on your own. Lean on the Trimester Zero app for guidance, education, tracking tools, and grounded support throughout every phase of your conception journey.

12. THE DAILY RITUALS THAT QUIETLY CHANGE EVERYTHING

Everything in this guide distils down to this: small, consistent practices done daily with intention. Not perfection. Not an overwhelming 2-hour morning routine. Just a handful of anchors that keep your nervous system regulated, your body nourished, and your mind clear.

Here's the why behind each practice because when you understand the mechanism, you're far more likely to stay with it.

Morning

🌿 Ground

Bare feet on grass, sand, or earth for even 2 minutes. This practice, sometimes called earthing, involves direct skin-to-earth contact. Emerging research suggests it may reduce cortisol and inflammation by allowing electrons from the earth's surface to neutralise free radicals in the body. The science is still building, but the worst case scenario here is two minutes outside with bare feet which, honestly, is its own reward. It also anchors you in the present moment before the day takes over.

🏃 Breathe

Box breathing (inhale 4, hold 4, exhale 4, hold 4 x 5 rounds). This directly activates the vagus nerve, shifting you from sympathetic to parasympathetic before you've even had breakfast.

💧 Hydrate

Warm water with lemon before anything else. You wake dehydrated. Warm water supports digestion and gentle detoxification; lemon adds vitamin C and stimulates bile flow.

📖 Intention

One sentence in your journal or a quiet thought: what do I want to feel today? This is not a productivity exercise. It's a signal to your nervous system about the quality of the day ahead.

🍴 Nourish

A warm, cooked breakfast rather than cold smoothies first thing. Cold, raw food first thing is hard on digestion and can tax kidney yang energy, a principle from Traditional Chinese Medicine that maps well to what we know about gut health and morning cortisol.

Evening

📴 Unplug

Screens off 30–60 minutes before bed. Blue light suppresses melatonin and keeps cortisol elevated. This is one of the most impactful sleep improvements you can make.

🌸 Body care

Magnesium foot soak or bath before bed using magnesium flakes (magnesium chloride dissolved in warm water) promotes relaxation and deeper sleep. Magnesium is involved in over 300 processes in the body including muscle relaxation, nervous system function, and sleep regulation. It absorbs through the skin (called transdermal absorption), making a warm foot soak both genuinely effective and an excellent reason to sit still for ten minutes at the end of the day.

Swimming in the ocean may offer similar benefits, as seawater naturally contains magnesium along with other minerals. While the extent of mineral absorption from seawater is still debated, many people find that an ocean swim helps ease muscle tension, calm the nervous system, and improve sleep quality. Combined with the grounding effects of being in nature and the gentle physical activity of swimming, a dip in the ocean can be a deeply restorative way to support relaxation and overall wellbeing.

🌙 Cycle log

Log your BBT, cervical mucus, energy, and mood. Takes 2 minutes. Over time, this data becomes invaluable, patterns emerge that you'd never notice otherwise. Research on co-regulation confirms this has a measurable physiological effect on your hormonal environment.

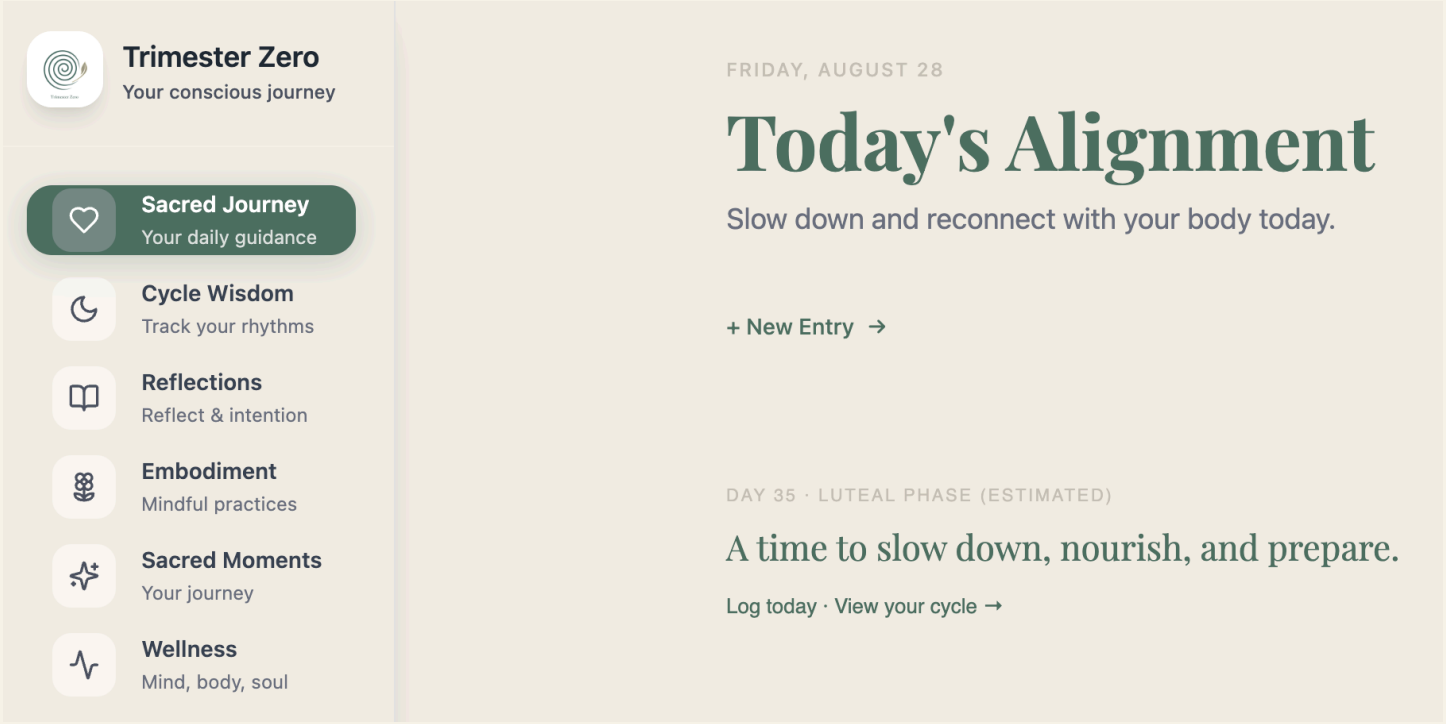
✍️ Release

A gentle word dump of anything still circling your mind, so it doesn't follow you into sleep. Writing things down signals to the brain that it no longer needs to hold onto them, making this a simple yet powerful tool to support a calmer nervous system and deeper rest.

Consistency over intensity, always. These practices compound quietly. You'll notice the shift over weeks, not days. ***Be patient and kind with yourself.***

Everything in this guide is already waiting for you inside Trimester Zero.

The morning and evening rituals you've just read about — the breathwork, the cycle log, the wind-down check-in, the journal prompt — are all in the app, personalised to where you are in your cycle. You don't have to remember any of it. It's already there.



Here's your first day.

You open the app to your dashboard: today's date, your cycle phase, and a single prompt — *Begin*. A short card walks you through your four phases. You log your first entry: mood, energy, symptoms, how you're feeling in your body. At ten, Take 10 at 10 invites you to pause for ten minutes — to breathe, journal, or move. In the evening, your wind-down reminder brings you back to close the day with intention.

That's it. Calm, guided, and completely yours — no ads, no noise, and your data stays with you.

Ready to Go Deeper?

Wherever you are in this journey right now, whether you're just beginning to wonder, actively trying, or somewhere in the beautiful, complicated middle. You are not doing this alone. This work matters. You matter. And the fact that you're here, reading this, preparing with this level of care, says everything about the parent you're already becoming. 👐

[Start your 14-day free trial →]

trimesterzero.com.au ·
A$16.99/month or A$99/year after your trial. Cancel anytime.

I built Trimester Zero because every cycle app I tried felt loud, cluttered, and hungry for my data, and I wanted something that felt like being held instead. I hope it feels that way for you too.

With love and gratitude,
Kath

For guidance only. Not a substitute for professional medical advice. Always consult a qualified healthcare provider.

Photography by Woven by Nicole and Phoebe Galloway