



**Commencing Wednesday 5 May 2010,
Mater Mothers' Hospitals in collaboration with our GP partners are introducing a**

Preconception Care Service

What is preconception care and why is it important?

Preconception care describes a model of care where women planning a pregnancy are able to optimise their own health and therefore the health of their pregnancy. Preconception care is not new. For many years it has been recommended that women planning a pregnancy take folate supplementation, for example, to reduce the risk of neural tube defects. In women with pre-existing chronic health conditions, like diabetes, it has been known for some time that tight glycaemic control around the time of conception reduces the risks of miscarriage and structural abnormalities. However it is only in recent times that people have begun to consider a more coordinated approach to preconception care.

In late 2008 there were several important publications and recommendations from bodies such as the CDC and the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, advocating the establishment of a coordinated preconception service. There appears to be value in such an approach for women with pre-existing health conditions (where optimisation of the disease process may reduce risk) but also for women without pre-existing health conditions where optimisation of weight, vaccination, ceasing smoking, for example, may similarly reduce risk.

Why is the service being run as a pilot?

Preconception care is a primary care health issue. However comprehensive preconception takes time and is not currently remunerated appropriately by Medicare. In order to justify change, there is a clear need to prove that women who attend preconception care can and do optimise their health and improve pregnancy outcomes which may also reduce the overall cost of pregnancy healthcare. We plan to formally evaluate this service and the outcomes of pregnancies for women who attend this service in order to demonstrate that the intervention has a positive health benefit for mothers and babies.

Who can I refer?

The service is being piloted at Mater and in a number of GP practices. You can refer any woman who is planning to fall pregnant and would be likely to choose Mater for her forthcoming pregnancy. We would be most interested in providing care for women with more complex health issues; however we would welcome referrals from any woman planning a pregnancy.

How do I refer?

We require a named referral to Dr Tania Widmer, Obstetrician Mater Health Services, sent by fax to 07 3163 1949. The Mater Mothers' Hospital GP Liaison Midwife (telephone 0466 205 710 or 07 3163 1861) can assist with any queries regarding referrals.

How much does it cost?

The cost of the consultation will be bulk-billed through Medicare. There is no out-of-pocket expense for women referred to this service.