

Good Nutrition *Prior* to Conception Ensures a Healthy Pregnancy

When do most women start thinking about prenatal nutrition? Mostly **after** they confirm a pregnancy! If you were planning a cross-country road trip, it is likely you would have your car checked over thoroughly and serviced accordingly **before** you begin the journey. Why not do the same in preparation for growing and hauling your most precious cargo—your future child?

Nutrition levels during pregnancy affect not just the child of that pregnancy, but several generations past that child! The ideal time to begin is 6 months to 1 year **before** you plan to conceive. This goes for the father as well as the mother. Paternal nutrition affects how healthy and viable his sperm will be.

So how does one find out their nutritional profile? They can get lab work done to assess their status of B vitamins, Vitamin D, Essential Fatty Acids, Calcium, Magnesium, and anti-oxidants—all essential to supporting a healthy pregnancy. It is important to assess digestive function by testing for overgrowth of unhealthy bacteria in the gut. If a person has poor assimilation of the foods they are eating, they are not going to be able to nourish a fetus very well and they will end up extremely deficient themselves.

It is important to check the detoxification pathways in the liver. Unfortunately, our world has become more filled with

toxins every year and it is only safe to detoxify the body **before** conception. Most mothers have no idea how many toxins are floating around in their systems and can do a good detoxifying program before conception **if** they plan ahead. Studies on chlorine by the California Dept. of Health Services have shown that women who drink bottled or filtered water during and before pregnancy have substantially lower rates of birth defects and miscarriages compared to those who drink tap water. A chlorine filter for the shower is also a good idea, as you absorb the chlorine through the skin as well as inhaling it.

Another aspect of toxins is the baby's room. If you are going to be decorating this room with new paint and carpet, do it early—at least 3 months before baby is due. This gives the room a chance to "outgas" the fumes from paint and carpet. The crib mattress should be purchased ahead of time and left uncovered to outgas as well. Keep mom out of the room as much as possible during this time, be sure air it out daily and close off from the rest of the house.

Getting in shape before conception can ensure a healthier pregnancy. Raising your fitness level before conception has been shown to lower the risk of gestational diabetes by 56-69 percent, as well as lowering the incidence of lower back pain during pregnancy. Other studies show that women who were previously active who became sedentary during pregnancy were more likely to have a low birth weight baby.

It is, of course, essential to eat well to build up nutrient levels in the body in preparation for conception. Choose mostly organic foods and meats and poultry raised

without hormones or antibiotics. Emphasize fresh fruits and vegetables with a variety of colors and lots of leafy greens. Include some protein (3-4 oz.) at every meal. Eliminate refined foods, sugars and artificial sweeteners, flour, and fried foods. Eat **whole** grains and beans for complex carbohydrates and fiber. Fats should come from fish, olives and their oil, avocados, and coconut milk and oil. Supplementing with a good multivitamin/mineral with adequate doses of folic acid is vital for preventing birth defects. For the baby's brain development a good fish oil supplement with GLA added is also important. Avoiding caffeine and alcohol, and lowering salt intake is good preparation for pregnancy.

Giving yourself the time you need to be well prepared to nourish your baby from the moment of conception will pay off big rewards by having a healthy pregnancy with fewer problems and giving birth to a healthy baby. The bonus will be that you will be that much healthier after the birth and in great shape to mother your new offspring.

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