[IMAGE]

Preparing for Baby

By Dr. Claudia Anrig

For women considering becoming pregnant, healthy nutrition and lifestyle habits are an absolute must, both for your sake and the sake of your future child. If you’re considering starting a family, here’s what you need to know before you decide to have a baby.

Most women don’t understand the importance of establishing healthy eating and lifestyle habits *before* becoming pregnant. It’s rare that great nutritional advice is provided to women until after they’ve conceived, and the Western lifestyle often leads to unhealthy and out-of-balance choices.

The first question to ask your doctor is: What does the body require to have a healthy pregnancy? Start with the whole-food concept. To eat a balanced diet, we should understand that living a "whole-foods" rather than a "processed" lifestyle is best for you and your future baby.

Start With Whole Foods

- Woman standing in front of the ocean. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Proteins and iron are important, preferably derived from organic, grass-fed, or hormone- and antibiotic-free beef, lamb and poultry. Eggs will provide vitamin A. Additional sources of iron can be found in wheat germ, bran, nuts, parsley and molasses. Essential fatty acids and protein can be found in fatty fish (salmon, black cod, etc.). Fish oil supplements should be a part of the regimen as well.
- Dairy products are a great source of calcium and protein, but your diet should be balanced with other healthy calcium sources such as soy products, nuts, seaweed products, wheat germ or wheat bran.
- Beans, legumes and green leafy vegetables provide fiber, protein and other essential vitamins for a healthy, balanced diet.
- Folic acid and vitamin B are addressed with a diet of whole grains, nuts and dairy products. Monounsaturated fats also can be found in nuts and avocados. Berries provide antioxidants, additional vitamins and phytonutrients.

Woman stretching her legs before running. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark When considering dietary changes, remember that living foods do not come in boxes or packages. They will not be found in the aisles of your grocery store, but in the meat, dairy and produce sections.

Review Your Eating Habits

A "wellness pregnancy" shouldn’t start once you become pregnant; it should start four to 12 months prior to conceiving. One of the first things you should do after deciding to have a baby is ask your doctor for nutritional advice.

The vital initial step in having this discussion involves providing your chiropractor with a nutritional journal for one week so they can review your eating and drinking habits. Often it’s not how much you’re consuming that will concern your doctor, but rather what you’re eating.

When reviewing your diet journal, your doctor is going to be looking for specific problem areas:

- Missed meals (usually breakfast)
- High carbohydrates
- Low proteins
- Unhealthy fats
- Processed foods
- High caffeine
- Other chemicals

Woman cutting up vegetables. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **Stop the Addiction**

One of the most common dietary "problems" is high intake of caffeine, known to decrease the opportunity of conceiving and slightly increase the likelihood of miscarriage in the first trimester. With the craze of specialty coffees not going away and the high consumption of diet colas, we live in a caffeine-driven society.

Woman eating a healthy salad. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark A woman with a caffeine addiction should slowly eliminate this habit. If you consume five cups of coffee a day, give yourself an attainable goal that would be easy to reach quickly. For example, go down to four cups of coffee a day for a few weeks, and then slowly lower consumption to three cups a day, with the goal of being down to one cup

of coffee or tea per day in 12 weeks.

Many women who drink diet sodas for caffeine also are addicted to carbonation. As you slowly reduce your daily intake of diet soda, you can use carbonated water to satisfy your fizz need. It’s OK to have a diet soda once or twice a month so you don’t feel as if you are being totally cheated out of your favorites. However, as you get closer to your conception window, this soda habit should be eliminated completely until after your baby is born.

Replace Bad With Good

Woman cutting up vegetables. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark The saying is true: Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. A great nutritional start to your day should include protein, vegetables and legumes. For example, a scrambled egg with lightly steamed spinach and black beans wrapped in a whole-grain tortilla is an easy way to fuel your body.

Throughout the day, you should eat healthy snacks to keep your energy up. Healthy snacks for women include raw nuts, fruits, and dairy and soy products. For example, a handful of raw almonds and a slice of apple or a slice of avocado mixed with black beans is a much healthier choice than a diet soda and a few cookies.

Whether you’re eating at home or going out to lunch or dinner, you can make healthy choices with a few simple substitutions.

- Instead of fried or red meat, eat broiled chicken or fish.
- Instead of rice, potatoes and other white starches, eat green vegetables.
- Instead of soda or coffee, drink a glass of water.
- Instead of desserts high in fat and processed sugar, eat fresh berries and yogurt.

Changing your eating and drinking lifestyle is vital for your health and the health of your future baby. With all the unhealthy choices out there, it’s important to make the right choices now, not after you’re pregnant. And implementing a healthier eating lifestyle and making it part of your everyday living could have a huge impact on how you feed your entire family.

A Healthy *You* Helps Ensure a Healthy *Child*

The National Women's Health Information Center (www.womenshealth.gov), a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, recommends women take the following measures *before* becoming pregnant:

Control your stress. When it comes to work and family, figure out what you can and can't do. Set limits with yourself and others. Don't be afraid to turn down requests for your time and energy if it's too much to handle.

Move your body. Once you get pregnant, you can't increase your exercise routine that much, so get started before baby is on the way.

Woman doing sit-ups. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **Get any health problems under control.** Talk to your doctor about how your health problems might affect you and your baby. If you have diabetes, monitor your blood sugar levels. If you have high blood pressure, monitor these levels as well. If you are overweight, talk to your doctor about how to reach a healthy weight.

Get enough sleep. Try to get seven to nine hours every night.

Tell your doctor if you smoke or use alcohol or drugs, none of which are healthy for you or your developing child. Your doctor can provide you with information on the dangers of these habits and a strategy to help you quit.

Ask people who've had children about their pregnancies. Did they have morning sickness or problems with labor? How did they cope?

A pregnant woman. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **Find out what health problems run in your family.** Tell these to your doctor. You can get tested for health problems that run in families before getting pregnant (genetic testing).

Get checked for hepatitis (B and C) and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). These infections can harm you and your baby. Tell your doctor if you or your sex partners have ever had an STD or HIV.

Review all of the medicines you take (prescription, over-the-counter and herbals) with your doctor. Make sure they are safe to take while you're trying to get pregnant or are pregnant.

Get 400 micrograms of folic acid daily. Eat foods fortified with folic acid (leafy green vegetables, kidney beans, orange juice and other citrus fruits, peanuts, broccoli, asparagus), take a multivitamin, or take a folic acid pill to get your daily dose. Studies show that adequate folic acid intake reduces the risk of birth defects such as spina bifida.

Claudia Anrig, DC, practices in Fresno, Calif., and is on the board of directors of the International Chiropractic Pediatric Association, an organization that can answer your questions regarding the value of chiropractic care during and after pregnancy.

Page printed from:
http://www.toyourhealth.com/mpacms/tyh/article.php?id=1029&no_paginate=true&no_b=true