

## HEALTHY KIDS



## HEALTHY PREGNANCY - PRE-CONCEPTION THROUGH DELIVERY

*By Katie Greeley DC, CACCP*

CREATING A LIFE IS ONE OF THE MOST JOYFUL EXPERIENCES A MOTHER CAN HAVE. IN 1999 WHEN I BECAME PREGNANT FOR THE FIRST TIME I WAS EXCITED AND NERVOUS AT THE SAME TIME. I WONDERED IF I KNEW ENOUGH ABOUT WHAT TO EXPECT AND WHAT I COULD DO TO ENSURE HAVING THE HEALTHIEST, MOST NATURAL PREGNANCY AND DELIVERY.

When your body goes through pregnancy changes they happen so quickly and the new experiences can lead to very unfamiliar feelings.

The good news is there is a lot you can do before you become pregnant as well as throughout labor and delivery. Just as with planning your wedding, before you conceive you need at least six to 12 months to prepare.

### **You Are What You Eat**

With the rise of disorders like autism and ADHD you can't ignore what you are eating and exposing yourself to prior to conception.

This is a perfect time to improve your diet. Adding prenatal multi vitamins free from dyes and toxic preservatives is good but it shouldn't stop there. You need to make better lifestyle choices,

such as adding organically-grown grains, vegetables, fruits, nuts and sources of protein.

Organic is important because, according to the Environmental Working Group (EWG), “Eating just five servings of fruits and vegetables from the 12 most contaminated would cause you to consume an average of 14 different pesticides a day.”

If you have a history of digestive problems, food allergies, bloating or yeast issues, consider a natural detox and digestive tract clean up—assisted by someone who is well-informed. Good sources of fiber include ground flax seed, psyllium husks, bran, whole grains, nuts and seeds. You will pass on your intestinal flora to your baby even if it is sub-par. If you were bottle-fed, you didn't receive the natural gut flora from your mother. If you were prescribed antibiotics for various infections in childhood, that also reduced the natural flora in your system.

Since probiotics decrease intestinal absorption of certain chemicals by facilitating their excretion, after cleaning up your gut you should implement probiotics in your diet. You should also eliminate alcohol and tobacco use.

### **Avoid Using Harmful Chemicals**

A two-year study by EWG showed that newborns were born with 232 different toxic chemicals in their bloodstream. A 2006 report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) stated the average American had 116 of 148 synthetic toxins in their blood. It's a good idea to have a general blood test prior to conception and also check your Vitamin D levels (D3 in particular).

### **There are many ways to reduce your use of chemicals, but here are some common ones:**

- Switch to greener cleaning and personal care products.
- Use green dry cleaners and carpet cleaners.
- Consume water and other fluids using stainless steel or glass bottles.
- Lots of fish and sushi have large amounts of mercury; use a mercury-free source of omega-3 fatty acids.
- Minimize exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMFs) and keep cell phones in purses instead of pockets.
- If you plan to remove your mercury-based amalgam dental fillings, do it at least six months prior to conception (select a dentist trained in removing the fillings safely).
- Avoid bedding and clothing with flame retardants that may contain high levels of antimony and toxic substances.

### **Health Tips for Pregnancy**

Beginning a regular chiropractic care with a family wellness practitioner will prepare you for childbirth. It will optimize your nerve and immune system function and specific adjustments will balance your pelvic muscles and ligaments.

### **There are many things you should eliminate during pregnancy. Some of these are:**

- Artificial sweeteners.

- Soft drinks.
- Pre-packaged foods and foods with trans-fats.
- Fast food.
- White flour and refined sugar.
- All mercury exposure such as in dental work, flu shots and fish.
- Antibiotics and other over the counter and prescription medication (no pharmaceutical drug on the market has been proven safe for pregnancy. New studies show antidepressants are especially dangerous).

**There is also a list of things you should do before, during and after pregnancy:**

- Optimize your cardiac health—begin or continue your exercise routine. Exercise encourages good bowel movements as well as improving circulation. Walking 15 to 45 minutes four to five times a week and/or incorporating prenatal yoga, swimming or a stationary bicycle are all good exercises.
- There is a higher risk of autism in cesarean-delivered babies. Your baby’s neurological function could be limited by skipping labor. Being able to walk and push on all fours will help your pelvis open and birth with greater ease, thus minimizing the forceful use of doctor-assisted pulling, forceps and vacuum extraction.
- Minimize intrusive procedures during labor such as multiple ultrasounds, induction, pain meds, epidurals, early cord clamping, etc. by researching and discussing these with your midwife or doctor.
- Maintain good blood sugar levels by eating six small meals a day.

**Pregnancy Health Care Team**

Start building a pregnancy health care team early during your pregnancy. Interview midwives or obstetricians until you find one who makes you feel comfortable and empowered. Interview doulas, lactation consultants, prenatal instructors, family wellness chiropractors and pediatricians early. Discuss your views on health openly.

Home births are not for all, but in 2005 the British Medical Journal found natural birth at home with certified practicing midwives is safe for low-risk mothers and their babies. They also found home births had much lower rates of medical interventions compared to births in hospitals.

**Nutrition Pointers for Baby**

Consider breast-feeding your baby. Not only is this great to bond but it’s one of the best ways to provide optimal nutrition.

Minimize the possibility of food allergies by postponing solid foods until at least 6 months. Start with organic vegetables then introduce fruits. Make sure you wait at least four days between new food introductions to make sure there are no reactions.

Don’t introduce grains until your baby has teeth, when the digestive enzyme to break grains down is first present.

If mom has a history of eczema, food allergies and/or celiac, then avoid dairy, soy, gluten and grains.

**The Benefits of Chiropractic Care** Birthing can be strenuous for mother and baby, so both of you should be checked by a chiropractor who specializes in pediatrics to support strong nerve and immune system function.

If your fetus is abnormally positioned, “The Webster protocol is a specific chiropractic sacral analysis and diversified adjustment. The goal of the adjustment is to reduce the effects of the sacral subluxation/sacroiliac (SI) joint dysfunction. In doing so the neuro-biomechanical function in the pelvis is facilitated.”

In a practice-based study, 70 percent of pregnancies presenting with an abnormal position of the fetus reported a correction to the vertex or head-down position using the Webster technique.

All-in-all, it’s important to evaluate your lifestyle choices so you can pass on the best to your children. It is a small sacrifice for their health and well-being—they’re worth it.

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