

## From Conception to Birth and Beyond

First it is important to remember that our bodies are all made by pure nature, not by science, or in a factory. So too are all the fruits, berries, nuts, seeds, fish, animals and animal products nature produces in abundance for us to eat. Our bodies are exquisitely designed to recognise, digest, absorb and utilize all the nutrients in these foods. It is pure common sense that this is what we should be eating at all times, and most importantly at a time when we are concerned with creating a whole new perfect human being.

Optimal nutrition for a healthy mother and baby begins well before conception. Pre-conception health involves both the mother and father, and with great health comes the much greater likelihood of an easy conception along with increased energy and vitality throughout pregnancy, a healthful pregnancy and the natural birth of a healthy robust, perfect child!

When you have all the nutrients you need for your baby you will be protecting against the likelihood of such things as:

- Congenital developmental defects such as neural tube defects
- Urinary tract anomalies
- Heart defects
- Congenital hydrocephalus
- Facial anomalies such as cleft palate and cleft lip
- Low birth weight

Following are the core nutrients for mother and child as pregnancy proceeds:

1. Vitamin D. During pregnancy Vitamin D has a role in mineral balance, particularly depositing Calcium in the skeleton of the growing foetus. It is also vital to brain development and the immune system. It is widely recognised that Vitamin D deficiency during prenatal development may increase the risk of a range of diseases such as Rickets, multiple sclerosis, schizophrenia, type1 and type 2 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, heart disease and cancer. Low Vitamin D has also been linked to pre-eclampsia and the need for caesarean section. Children who did not get enough Vitamin D in utero are more at risk for developing wheezing disorders and asthma. Smart sun exposure generates Vitamin D production through our skin. Expose arms, legs and torso to the sun whenever possible, between the hours of 10am and 3pm, being careful not to burn. Apply sunscreen after a healthy amount of exposure if you are wishing to stay in the sun so as not to burn. Babies also need sun!!

Vitamin D Rich food sources

- Mackerel
- Herring
- Salmon
- Sardines
- Egg yolk
- Butter
- Milk
- Cod liver oil

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2. Calcium. Research has shown that most women do not receive enough calcium in their diet alone during pregnancy, particularly those who limit their intake of dairy products. Calcium is a mineral essential for the structure of our tissues, particularly bone.

#### Calcium rich food sources

- Hard cheeses
- Yoghurt
- Milk
- Whitebait
- Canned salmon and sardines with the bone in
- Broccoli
- Dark green leafy veges
- Ground sesame seeds/tahini
- Parsley
- Bone broth

3. Iodine. In 2008 the 22nd Australian Total Diet Study showed that 70% of women of child bearing age are not consuming enough iodine. Iodine is critically important in pregnancy for neuropsychological development in baby. Maternal deficiency can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, congenital anomalies, goitre and cretinism and children have learning difficulties, motor skill problems and hearing difficulties.

#### Iodine rich foods

- Mackerel
- Cod
- Ocean fish generally
- Shellfish
- Seaweed
- Miso soup

4. Iron. Important for general foetal development, especially the brain. Deficiency is associated with risk of low birth weight, pre-term delivery, post-partum depression, perinatal haemorrhage and mortality, psychomotor and cognitive abnormalities in children. Symptoms of low iron include poor stamina; unreasonable limb fatigue; dizziness; red, sore tongue; cracks on the corners of the mouth; concave nails; reduced resistance to infection; poor digestion

#### Iron rich foods

- Liver and organ meats
- Red meats
- Oysters
- Mussels
- Dark chicken meat
- Molasses
- Dark green leafy veges
- Lentils
- Dried apricots

5. Folic acid (B9). Folic acid has been long associated with decreased risk of neural tube defects. The current nutritional guidelines recommend 600ug dietary folate equivalent. This cannot be met without supplementation. Folate depends on vitB12 to be absorbed, stored and metabolised so, in other words, folate should always be taken with B12. It is ideal to begin taking a supplement containing folate 1 – 3 months before conception and it is most crucial in the first 4 weeks of pregnancy.

#### Folic acid rich foods

- Asparagus
- Dark green leafy veges
- Wheat germ
- Lentils
- Legumes
- Broccoli
- Nuts
- B12 rich foods
- Liver
- Poultry
- Crustaceans
- Fish
- Eggs
- Dairy
- Molasses

6. Zinc. Zinc has many roles in reproduction, embryo and foetal development, as well as infant growth. Zinc is known in more than 300 known enzyme systems in the body. Zinc is a very common deficiency, particularly in: vegetarians, those with poor digestion, IBS, IBD, Coeliac disease, women who have had a high number of pregnancies, a history of long term OCP (oral contraceptive pill) use, prolonged breastfeeding, alcoholics, smokers, teenagers.

#### Zinc rich foods

- Oysters
- Shellfish
- Fish
- Red meat
- Popcorn
- Seeds
- Walnuts
- Almonds
- Dahl
- Ginger root

7. Omega 3's. It's the DHA component of omega 3's which is most important during pregnancy and breastfeeding, most crucially for brain and eye development. DHA comprises of 11% of the weight of the human brain. There are clear links between depression and low DHA concentrations in the brain.

Supplementation is well indicated for pregnant mums and throughout the duration of breastfeeding. DHA levels are progressively depleted after each pregnancy, particularly if births are closely following each other.

#### Omega 3 rich foods

- Mackerel
- Salmon
- Herring
- Tuna
- Sardines
- Trout
- Flax seed oil
- Hemp seed oil

8. Vitamin A. Essential for growth, cellular differentiation and normal foetal development. Be aware that when supplementing it is toxic at high doses which are well above any recommended doses you will be given. I recommend a maximum of 5,000 IU per day. It is considered potentially toxic at doses over 25,000 IU per day!

#### Sources of Vitamin A

- Cod Liver oil
- Liver and other organ meats
- Pate

#### An extra note on body ecology...

The ecosystem which covers our entire external body, that is our skin and our mucous membrane from our mouth to our anus as well as our genito-urinary system, is a veritable forest of micro-organisms. It accounts for an estimated 3 kg's of adult body weight and consists of millions of microscopic bacteria, yeasts and parasites. There are many hundreds of different beneficial species of these micro-organisms and we rely on them all for our health. The health of the mother's ecosystem has a huge impact on the newly born child, who is close to sterile until it reaches the birth canal for its first inoculation of these micro-organisms. If the birth canal is healthy with the right balance and species of micro-organisms, baby has a great start!

If, however, the mother has imbalances, or is missing important species, baby is potentially set up to develop health issues ranging from mild digestive issues, allergies and intolerances, skin rashes and eczema, to behavioural disorders – ADD, ADHD through to Autism Spectrum Disorders, just to name a few of the most researched to date.

#### What creates imbalance to our personal ecosystem?

- Antibiotics
- Oral Contraceptive Pill
- Steroids
- Stress

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- Illness
- Infection
- Poor diet – a diet rich in processed foods, fast foods, Bad fats and high sugar

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So...

Eat well!

Live with love!

Be grateful for the gift of your life as you prepare to give the gift of life to a new human being!

Enjoy every precious moment!

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