



The Wellness Family

Dr. Heather Keeps You Informed

Meal Planning for Pregnancy

Women that are considering pregnancy or already pregnant will all agree with one statement: the advice is plentiful. You'll get advice about car seats, sleeping, breastfeeding, obstetricians, midwives, doulas, homebirths or hospitals, you name it. Surprisingly though, nutritional advice isn't typically at the top of the list, despite its importance.

When pregnant, a woman's body is literally creating the building blocks for another human being. The nutrients taken in while eating knit together in their womb to form their baby. With this in mind, it seems only logical that diet should be one of the highest priorities.

The Importance of Nutrition

Every bite of food we put in our mouths becomes part of our baby. If we're eating foods that are not rich in vitamins, minerals and protein then our body will need to pull those items from elsewhere. Logically, it's vital that we carefully consider what we're eating and how much.

Not all medical professionals will agree on the best pregnancy diet but most will agree on the basics: every pregnant woman needs folate acid, calcium, vitamin B and D3, protein and iron. While these can be taken as supplements the best source for these items is living, whole foods.

The Importance of Blood Volume

While pregnant the body works overtime to preserve the pregnancy and nourish the baby. In order to do this, the body needs to be able to increase the mother's blood volume. Typically, the blood volume will increase by 50-60% over the course of the pregnancy. If a woman weighs 130 pounds prior to pregnancy then her blood volume will increase from about 3 ½ quarts to over 5 ½.

Blood volume is increased when the liver makes albumin to facilitate the process of the body drawing fluid from her tissues and back into the blood circulating, but it can only make albumin with the protein consumed. A pregnant woman on a high protein but low-calorie diet will need to use the protein for energy, which will decrease the amount available to the body for creating albumin.

Salt will also help the body to draw fluid from tissue and so it's important to recognize the value of salt in a pregnant woman's diet. As long as she does not have heart or kidney issues prior to pregnancy, salt is a good thing.

For this same reason, it's unwise to take a diuretic during pregnancy. Even those found naturally in herbal teas such as nettle, dandelion and alfalfa should be avoided. Diuretics cause the kidneys to draw extra fluid from the body tissue,

resulting in less fluid available for use to increase blood volume. If the blood volume drops below what is necessary to support the pregnancy then the body will respond by constricting blood vessels and/or increasing blood pressure. Clearly both responses are not ideal when pregnant.

The Importance of Whole Living Food

While prenatal supplements are not a bad thing, the body was meant to pull vitamins, nutrients and other vital building blocks from the food consumed. We've all heard the old adage "you are what you eat", the fact is we are what our mothers ate.

When working on a prenatal diet plan be sure to find good sources of the most vital nutrients needed: protein, iron, fatty acids, calcium, fiber, folate acid and other essential vitamins.



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The Brewer Diet

Over 50 years ago, an obstetrician named Dr. Thomas Brewer created "The Brewer Diet" for pregnancy. While the purpose of the diet is to help prevent toxemia (preeclampsia and eclampsia), the truth is that it's beneficial for all stages of pregnancy.

The basic plan ensures that women are eating the right amount of foods to ensure their bodies have the nutrients needed to support their pregnancy. Moving beyond the basic 5 food groups, the Brewer Diet actually has 14 different groups of foods from which the recommended number of choices need to be consumed.

- Group 1 includes milk and milk products from which a woman should consume 4 choices of items such as milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, etc.
- Group 2 is called "calcium replacements" and adds additional sources of calcium from items such as vegetables and nuts.
- Group 3 is eggs with a recommended 2 each day cooked any style.

- Group 4 is the largest with 6 to 8 choices of protein sources including meat, poultry, fish, beans and even some dairy sources.
- Group 5 is fresh, dark green vegetables from which women should consume 2 choices of broccoli, spinach, asparagus, etc.
- Group 6 are whole grains and provide 5 choices of whole wheat, rye, bran or other whole grain food options.
- Group 7 is Vitamin C sources from which women can choose 2 items such as citrus fruit or 100% fruit juices as well as tomatoes, strawberries and other sources.
- Group 8 is fats and oils with a recommended 3 choices of butter, mayonnaise, avocado and more.
- Group 9 includes Vitamin A sources from which to choose 1 item such as apricots or cantaloupe.
- Group 10 is a recommendation that the woman consume 4 ounces of beef, calf, chicken, pork or turkey liver or liverwurst each week, however, this is the one group that is optional.
- Group 11 encourages an unlimited amount of salt or other sodium sources.
- Group 12 recommends unlimited amounts of water but mentions the importance of understanding limited stomach spaces which is covered in further detail below.
- Group 13 offers the woman that has already consumed the recommended items from the first 10 groups the option to snack on additional items from the first 10 groups.
- Group 14 advises that supplements may be needed but reminds the pregnant woman that supplements do not take the place of a sound, balanced diet of whole, living, nutritious foods.

For further detail on this diet consider purchasing the book *The Brewer Medical Diet for Normal and High-Risk Pregnancy* by Dr. Thomas Brewer. It is best to find an original source since an internet search will typically turn up variations and even some misconceptions.

Healthy Hydration

It is important that a pregnant woman is properly hydrated. As mentioned above, the fluid in the body is the source for the

needed increased blood volume. Dehydration may cause the body to work harder to create additional blood and thus may result in increased blood pressure. Hypertension is not good for a pregnancy.

However, as important as it is to stay hydrated, note that water is not the only source of fluids and is not a source of important nutrients (vitamins, minerals and protein).

When at the end of her second trimester and heading into her third, the baby begins to take up a lot of space and actually decreases available stomach space. So, Dr. Brewer recommends that an expectant mother drink to quench her thirst but not force fluids. Fruits, vegetables and juices all contain water plus needed nutrients.

Many medical professionals will recommend 1 gallon of water a day, but a woman consuming that much water may find herself full and then won't eat, a potential hazard in late pregnancy when every bit of food consumed is vital to her rapidly growing fetus.

For this same reason, avoid diet beverages, coffee, teas and imitation fruit drinks. When thirsty reach for a glass of milk or 100% fruit juice and get the added vitamins, minerals and proteins needed to support the body's job of nurturing that baby.

The Chiropractic Factor

Your Family Wellness Chiropractor is the only healthcare professional that recognizes the body's innate ability to regulate all of the body's systems. As with all other areas, a woman's body will do what it needs to during pregnancy without interference and it's vital that her body be given all the tools it needs to do so.

If you are concerned about your nutritional needs and dietary choices, journal your food intake for one week and bring it with you to your next appointment for review.

The information provided in this article should not replace the consultative advice of your primary pregnancy healthcare provider.



*Dear Patient,
Dr. Heather is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family's overall health and wellness.*

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