

PREGNANCY DIET SHEET

Pregnancy is not an illness but an altered state where a woman's body is exposed to higher quantities of hormones than it will have been in the rest of her life so far.

Digestion is affected directly by high levels of pregnancy hormones. They relax the muscles of the digestive system making everything slower. This can result in indigestion, bloating and constipation. Blood sugar control can also be disrupted. This can cause irritability, poor concentration, sugar cravings, dizziness and low energy.

DIET

FOODS TO AVOID

There are several foods, which are categorised as high risk due to possible contamination with bacteria. Unpasteurised milks, soft ripened cheeses such as brie, camembert and similar blue-veined cheeses, liver and liver products, pates, raw and undercooked eggs, ice cream from soft whip machines. If you or members of your close family suffer from peanut allergy or allergic disease such as atopic eczema, asthma or hayfever you should avoid eating peanuts or foods containing peanut products during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Caffeine is a stimulant found in coffee, tea, cocoa, chocolate and fizzy drinks. It passes via the mother's placenta to the baby. High caffeine intake has been linked to an increased risk of miscarriage and birth defects. For these reasons it is worth avoiding caffeine during pregnancy.

There are extra demands on a woman's nutrition during pregnancy. A natural wholefood diet is recommended. Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables - especially green leafy veg. Try to avoid processed and convenience foods. Do not diet during pregnancy.

VEGAN AND VEGETARIAN DIETS

Special care must be taken to include enough zinc, essential fats and iron in the diet. Vegans are probably already aware of the importance of B12. This is even more crucial in pregnancy as it is needed for cell division and nerve cell formation. Recent research has shown that protein intake is important for blood sugar control.

ESSENTIAL FATTY ACIDS

A developing baby has a high need for these beneficial fats and they will be utilised by the baby at the expense of the mother's body. Modern diets are generally deficient in them. Dietary sources are oily fish such as salmon, mackerel, sardines, herring, trout and linseeds for the omega 3 fatty acids and walnuts, seeds such as sesame, sunflower and pumpkin for omega 6 fatty acids. These can be found in supplements such as Udo's choice oil, which is available from a health food shop.

FOLIC ACID

This is very important in early pregnancy. A 400mcg supplement of folic acid is recommended for at least three months before coming pregnant and for the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. It is also worth eating foods rich in this B vitamin. These include: green vegetables such as spinach, broccoli, peas, cauliflower and green beans; oranges, grapefruits, bananas; milk, yoghurt; beans and pulses; some breads and cereals; yeast extract.

EXERCISE

Women who take plenty of exercise during pregnancy tend to have easier pregnancies and births than those who take little regular exercise. Sports such as skiing, climbing and horse riding or anything that may lead to a fall are not advisable, as are sports, which involve hard physical contact with other players. Swimming, walking and yoga are ideal. Exercise during pregnancy can be very beneficial for the heart and circulation and related conditions such as fluid retention, varicose veins and haemorrhoids. If you attend a gym or exercise class let your instructor know, as there are positions or machines you should avoid. Your local swimming pool may run specific antenatal aquarobic classes and there are antenatal yoga classes available. Yoga is particularly good in

later pregnancy to help prepare for the birth.

REST AND RELAXATION

These are important during pregnancy and should be appreciated before the baby comes! it is normal to feel tired in the first and last weeks of pregnancy. Listen to your body and if necessary cut down on activities. Pregnancy and parenthood are big life changes and it is perfectly normal for both parents-to-be to feel anxious or apprehensive. Hormonal changes in pregnancy can also cause mood changes.

GENERAL HEALTH

Your herbalist can treat complaints such as morning sickness, constipation, heartburn, fluid retention and anxiety as well as offer advice on treating existing medical conditions. There are many herbs, which are useful in preparing the body for birth - raspberry leaf tea is one such herb and can be bought over the counter. It is recommended that you start drinking this at 28 weeks (1 cup per day), at 32 weeks increasing to 2 cups per day and from 36 weeks onward 3 cups daily. Raspberry leaf has a toning and strengthening action on the uterus and can also be drunk during the first stage of labour. Herbs can also be useful during labour. Your herbalist can prescribe herbs for the different stages.

SUPPLEMENTS

As pregnancy places extra nutritional demands on the body, a multivitamin and mineral supplement is often a good idea. Choose one that is specific for pregnant and lactating women, as high doses of certain vitamins are not recommended during pregnancy.