



February e-newsletter, 2009

Topic: Health & Nutrition

Prenatal Health & Nutrition

Health and nutrition has never been more important than when you are growing a baby. Not only are you preparing for the marathon of childbirth and parenting, but your body is taxed more than ever with the extra demands on every system to accommodate for the rigors of pregnancy and the new life inside. It is important to go into any pregnancy in optimal health to minimize the stress on your body. Additionally, studies have shown that taking 400 mcg of folic acid and a prenatal vitamin daily prior to conceiving can help reduce the incidence of neural tube defects and other anomalies in the baby.

Once pregnant, paying close attention to nutrition can have lasting effects on the health of both you, and the baby. Focusing on healthy choices, minimizing consumption of processed foods (anything pre-made, packaged or frozen), and increasing your daily protein (meats and tofu) intake can help support your body, as well as keep your weight gain in check. A good rule of thumb is to shop the perimeter of the grocery store. That is where you will find the fresh and whole foods while the inner aisles are where the processed foods reside. Do not underestimate the power of fluids! Hydration is essential during pregnancy. Staying well hydrated not only helps with that gorgeous pregnancy glow, but is also essential in helping avoid preterm labor. Additionally, it is recommended that you limit your caffeine intake to one cup a day as caffeine is a diuretic.

If nutrition and exercise has never been your strong suit, do not fear...it is never too late to start, and it might be easier than you think. Even small changes like switching to organic produce and dairy items, adding quality protein, fruits and vegetables to every meal will go a long way in improving your nutritional status and give your baby the best possible start. As for exercise, pregnancy is not the time to start an intensive training program, however, if you are already in an exercise program, keep it up, you and the baby will reap the benefits! Be sure to tailor your activities to your expanding belly both for balance and to keep your heart rate in a healthy range. If you are a stranger to the gym, pregnancy is not the time to be a couch potato. Childbirth is a marathon, and you should be prepared. A daily 30-minute walk will work to improve your cardiovascular state and keep that dreaded ankle swelling at bay. Of course, make sure your care provider is in support of your exercise plan as well.

Pickles and ice cream? Many pregnant women report strong cravings during pregnancy. I recall one weekend during my second pregnancy that I only wanted to eat spiced apple yogurt and flavored mineral water. While that does not sound very nutritionally sound, I recommend you eat exactly what you crave. Avoiding that craving and trying to satisfy it somewhere else will often result in eating everything in the pantry and still retaining the craving because you simply are not satisfied! On a side note, if you find that you are craving non-food items, like dirt or paper, make sure to discuss it with your care provider. This is characteristic of a disorder called Pica and often associated with nutritional or mineral deficiencies.

Postnatal Health & Nutrition

The big day has come and gone...now what? Postpartum is an enormous adjustment for you both physically and emotionally. Remaining diligent with your nutrition can help to stabilize your hormones, support breastfeeding, and help you control your weight loss. It is recommended that you continue



with your prenatal supplements during the first two months postpartum and as long as you breastfeed. Additionally, it is essential that you take in enough calories and fluids to support your recovery and milk production. While pregnancy only burns an extra 300 calories a day, production of breast milk can burn up to 1100 extra calories a day! The best way to gauge your calorie intake is to watch your weight loss. The first 2 weeks postpartum I recommend that you do not weigh yourself. Weight loss will be erratic and possibly dramatic, but after those two weeks, you should lose no more than 2 pounds per week. If you are losing more than that, you should pay attention to adding good fats (nuts, avocado, quality dairy products) into your diet to increase your overall calorie intake. Once again, hydration is important, adequate fluid intake will assist with flushing that extra swelling and assist in adequate milk production.

Your desire to get back into those pre-pregnant jeans may drive you into a crazy diet and exercise program the day you come home from the hospital. However, it is important that you allow your body the time it needs to recover from childbirth before you jump back into the gym. 6-8 weeks of rest and recovery is essential to allow for hormonal adjustment and to allow your joints and ligaments to return to their pre-pregnant state. Rushing back too soon can cause injury that will sideline you even longer! When you do return to your exercise program, go slow and keep your expectations realistic.

As you move into your new role as a parent, these guidelines should not stop. Incorporating good nutrition, health, and exercise principles into your lifestyle will provide a good example for your children. Keep your commitment to healthy and organic foods when you introduce solid foods to your baby. Add your children into your exercise program, spend time as a family being active—making it fun for everyone! When your children grow up in a healthful environment they will be more inclined to make good choices for themselves when the time comes.

Resources:

Exercise: Stroller Strides- A national program that brings moms, babies and their strollers together for group exercise! Go online and search for your local chapter. <http://www.strollerstrides.com/>

Fresh & Frozen Organic Baby Food: Pomme Bebe-Newport Beach, CA. Also online at: <http://www.pommebebe.com/>

Healthy Recipe: Baked Protein Pasta-

- 1 box high-protein whole wheat penne pasta
- 1 cup asparagus cut into 1" pieces (substitute zucchini or broccoli)
- 1 lb ground turkey
- 1 T extra virgin olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 1 t dried Italian seasoning
- 1 jar low sodium marinara sauce
- 1 cup part skim shredded mozzarella cheese

Cook the pasta following the directions on the box. During the last minute of boiling add the asparagus then drain the pasta and asparagus and set aside.



Over medium heat sauté the onion and garlic in olive oil, add ground turkey and Italian seasoning, and brown. In a large bowl combine the sauce, meat, and pasta.

In a 2 qt casserole layer the pasta mixture with shredded cheese ending with cheese. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 25-30 minutes until cheese is bubbly.

Questions?

Contact Nurse Wendy!

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