



The Wellness Family

Dr. [YOUR NAME HERE] Keeps You Informed

Pre-Conception Wellness

Deciding to have a baby is one of the most important decisions you'll ever make. Or is it? Truthfully, the most important decision you'll ever make for that baby is to prepare your body in advance for the important job that it will do.

Birth Control

Studies have shown that roughly 30% of all women are using the pill. Many are doing so for non-contraceptive reasons. For instance, to regulate their period or decrease the severity of the symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (1, 2). Regardless of why they're taking it, many women are under the impression that as soon as they're ready to get pregnant that they have only to quit taking the pill and within a month or two they'll conceive. While this may be the case for some, it is not the case for all.

First, doctors recommend waiting at least 2 or 3 months after stopping the pill before even attempting to get pregnant. The typical reason given is to allow the body to return to its normal hormone levels, though there is really no research regarding this. Some women, especially those who have had a miscarriage or a stillborn, experience a sudden drop in hormone levels which causes their body to make an egg. It's important to realize that normally the body creates an egg and then the menstrual period is caused by that egg not being fertilized; this is not the case for the woman taking an oral contraceptive. While taking the pill the body is convinced not to create an egg and the period is caused merely by a sudden drop in hormone levels.

Other Drug Use

Because up to half of all pregnancies are unplanned, it has been estimated that more than a million babies have been exposed to drugs in the first or second month of pregnancy (3-5). A study performed by Boston University and reports from the Centers for Disease Control in 2011 showed that 70-80% of pregnant women have reported taking at least one medication (6).

The concern with this is that 90% of medications approved by the US Federal Drug Administration from 1980-2000 had insufficient data to determine if they were

safe to take during pregnancy. While many women are being prescribed these specific medications, studies have not been done to determine if these chemicals will cross the placenta and how they may affect the fetus (7-8).

Between 2010 and 2012, studies have reported that not only is antidepressant use during pregnancy on the rise, but their use has been linked to birth defects. Additional studies have shown that children whose mothers took Zoloft, Prozac and similar antidepressants were twice as likely to have a diagnosis of autism or other related developmental disorders (9-12).



Studies have shown there are underlying biological mechanisms in place for babies that contribute to the lifetime health of their children.

Preparation for Your Body

While having a baby is the most natural thing in the world, just like most other areas of this industrialized world, the convenience we live in can sometimes interfere. Processed foods, caffeine, aspartame, high fructose corn syrup and chemicals for depression and contraception have all affected our bodies and potentially caused areas of concern.

That's why before considering conception it's important to make a few lifestyle changes to ensure that your pregnancy has the best chance of success.

Avoid the Chemicals

Not only are chemicals unhealthy for you but there have been links between many food additives and pregnancy risks. For instance, an American Journal of Clinical Nutrition study published in 2010 concluded that a daily intake of artificially sweetened soft drinks may increase the risk of preterm delivery. In addition, when aspartame, commonly known as NutraSweet, is consumed during pregnancy it may potentially contribute to autism and spina bifida (13-14).

Another concern is caffeine. Studies have shown that it crosses the placenta and can cause birth defects. Additionally, it can actually reduce fertility or delay conception. But perhaps the greatest concern is that two studies in



2008 showed that women who consume 200mg or more of caffeine are twice as likely to miscarry (15). Another study published in 2016 showed this is also true of pre-conception caffeine consumption (16). Since over half of pregnancies are unplanned, it's wise for all women of childbearing age to reduce their caffeine intake. Just two 8-oz cups of coffee contain almost 200mg of caffeine.

Healthy Eating

What a woman eats is the fuel her body uses to help her fetus develop, so make sure that it is only the healthiest and most nutritious foods are being consumed. First, be sure that you're eating organic as much as possible. The chemicals and pesticides used on commercially grown foods have not been tested for the affect they may have on your fetus. Genetically modified foods should be avoided as well since they have not been tested either.

Besides eating organic, eating six small meals a day is ideal. Be sure to drink at least 8 glasses of water; natural spring, not purified or tap. And be sure that you're getting at least 5 servings of vegetables and that healthy fats are in your diet.

The omega fatty acids are critical for fetal development, with Omega-3s being especially important for neurological development. Omega-3s are found in salmon, flaxseed, walnuts, soybeans, broccoli and cauliflower.

Omega-6s from flaxseed and soybeans help with skin and hair health. Omega-9s are found in olive oil, almonds and avocados. It's important to consume a balance of these fatty acids daily (17-20).

Exercise

If you already have a healthy exercise regimen then continue on that track in preparation for your pregnancy. If you do not already exercise regularly then now is the

time to start. It's been shown that women who are not physically active prior to conceiving will not develop an exercise program after conceiving. Even just walking 15 minutes out and back each day, 5 days a week, is a great start. Then gradually increase by 5 minutes until you're walking an hour a day. Walking has been proven to be beneficial for heart and joint health as well as has proven metabolic benefits.

Pre-Conception Care for Dads

Most women recognize the value of preparing their bodies for pregnancy. What many don't know is current research suggests that paternal pre-conception care is just as important.

In 2018, the Lancet Journal published the studies that address how the health of both women and men, before they even conceive, can have a profound impact on their offspring. Research has shown that lifestyle factors such as "adverse childhood experiences" can increase a child's risk of mental health issues, substance use, and chronic diseases. Paternal health, including factors like smoking, alcohol consumption, and stress, can also affect the health of their offspring. Paternal pre-conception care may include lifestyle changes, such as quitting smoking and drinking alcohol, and taking supplements like folic acid.

Other findings from these studies have proven, among other things, that there are underlying biological mechanisms in place for both parents that contribute to the lifetime health of their children (21).

The Chiropractic Factor

Your Doctor of Chiropractic is an excellent source of information for developing a wellness lifestyle prior to conceiving. Take a moment to talk to your Family Wellness Chiropractor today about a pre-conception consultation at least six months prior to conceiving. Some minor changes today could mean all the difference to your unborn baby.

References available upon request.



Dear Patient,
Dr. [YOUR NAME HERE] 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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