

# Maximize Your Fertility



*Clear Passage*  
PHYSICAL THERAPY



# Tips on Fertility

## Deciding When to Have Intercourse

### 1. Check Basal Body Temperature (BBT)

Take your body temperature with a basal thermometer every day, starting on the first day of your menstrual cycle. Do this first thing in the morning when you wake up, before getting out of bed, eating or drinking anything. It is ideal to take your temperature around the same time every day if possible. After ovulation occurs, there is an increase in the temperatures due to the rise in progesterone levels. You will be able to tell when you ovulated by the thermal shift of the temperatures.

You should not use the BBT to time intercourse. Many women do not experience a dip in temperatures before the rise they have been told to look for. Once the temperature rise has occurred, you have ALREADY ovulated, and it's usually too late for intercourse. Charting your BBT over a few months will help determine if you are ovulating and give you other information such as the length of your luteal phase.

### 2. Check Cervical Mucus and Cervix Position

Gently insert a finger inside the vagina and feel for the cervix, monitoring the texture and consistency of the mucus. This can be done best in a squatting position because it pushes the cervix closer to the vaginal opening. The quality of cervical mucus varies significantly for each woman.

#### A. Start of menstrual cycle:

1. Mucus is dry, but may be sticky or pasty.
2. Cervix is firm, not wet, and is low in the body. The opening of the cervix (the os), is closed.

#### B. A few days before ovulation (the best time to have intercourse starts here):

1. Mucus becomes creamy, milky, and wet.
2. The cervix will start to become softer to the touch.
3. Have intercourse every other day through ovulation.

#### C. During Ovulation:

1. Mucus is slippery, thick, stretchy, and clear with a slimy consistency like egg white. This fertile fluid can stretch from one to ten inches. It is usually clear, but can be yellow, pink, or red tinged. The critical determinant of when your cervical mucus is most fertile is when you have an extremely wet, lubricated vaginal sensation. It may even leave a round, circular pattern on your underwear due to the high water content.
2. The cervix is higher in the body and rotates forward. It should feel soft and very wet to the touch. The opening should feel more open or enlarged.

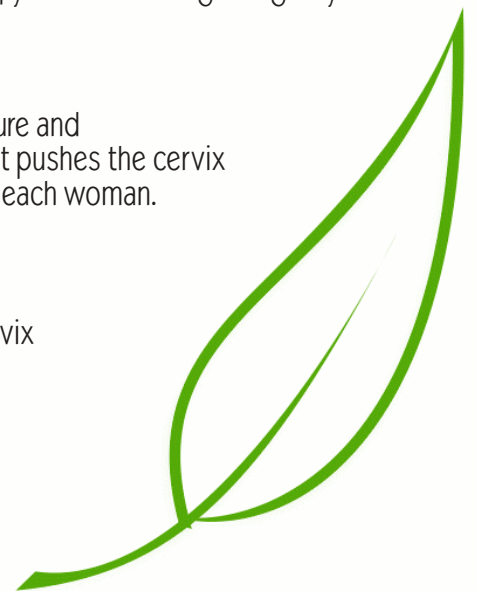
### 3. Ovulation Predictor Kits

Ovulation predictor kits measure levels of leutinizing hormone (LH) released in your system. It detects the surge in the LH that occurs just before ovulation. These tests vary, so follow the directions on the kit that you are using for the test.


**Make love within twelve to twenty-four hours of a positive ovulation predictor test.**

### 4. Make love in the morning.

*\*Monitor all of the aspects described above to best determine when you are ovulating. The latest research shows that it is best to make love within the four to five days before ovulation and the day of ovulation. Once you ovulate, the ovum usually only stays viable for 12 to 24 hours. However, sperm can live in the body for up to five days if the sperm count is normal and healthy.*



# Stress and Fertility



Seasonal changes, daily cycles of light and dark, and stress are all among the environmental factors that can strongly affect hormone secretion from the hypothalamus and pituitary gland. Located midline behind the eyes, the pituitary is really two functionally distinct hormone producing lobes, the anterior (front) and posterior (back) pituitary. The posterior pituitary stores and secretes oxytocin and antidiuretic hormone, but it is the anterior pituitary that is most actively involved in controlling the female fertility cycle. The anterior pituitary receives a hormonal 'pulse' from the hypothalamus that in turn triggers the release of follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) and leutinizing hormone (LH). FSH and LH control the balance of estrogen to progesterone throughout the follicular phase (the 14 days prior to ovulation) and the luteal phase (the 14 days following ovulation) of a woman's menstrual cycle.

The hypothalamus is considered the 'master gland.' of female reproduction. It is responsible for the flow and timing of all of the reproductive hormones, sending hormonal impulses to the pituitary every 1 to 1.5 hours during the follicular phase, and every 2 to 4 hours during the luteal phase of the cycle. The hypothalamus receives feedback from the pituitary and ovaries to modulate the rate of pulses initiated. The hypothalamus is extremely sensitive to both physical and emotional tensions, so any type of stress has an immediate effect on its functions.

The adrenal glands, that sit on top of the kidneys, strongly modify your body's response to stress. When you are experiencing chronic stress, the hypothalamus and the pituitary trigger the adrenal glands to release cortisol. When the amount of cortisol in the blood reaches a certain level, it signals the hypothalamus and pituitary to reduce their output of the hormones that trigger cortisol release. This self-regulating feedback system breaks down when you are under chronic stress and cortisol levels stay abnormally high, which can contribute greatly to menstrual dysfunction, infertility, as well as a higher incidence of endometriosis, vaginitis, and some STD's.

The good news is that as you eliminate as much stress as you can from your life, you can increase your chances for a fast, healthy conception. Take extra time for yourself and do whatever relaxes you at least 30 minutes per day. You are worth it!

# Exercise and Fertility

Being physically fit before you get pregnant can help you have a much healthier pregnancy, as well as a problem-free delivery. However, as beneficial as some types of exercise can be for your reproductive health, studies show that some strenuous activities can be detrimental to your reproductive health by inhibiting the function of your hypothalamus gland. This can upset the timing of the release of the reproductive hormones necessary for conception to take place. Too much exercise can decrease your ability to produce eggs, or cause menstrual irregularity irregular or no ovulation, amenorrhea (no periods) and infertility. Even when periods seem normal, heavy exercise can diminish progesterone levels so that an embryo might not be able to implant.

Activities such as marathon running, jogging more than 30 to 40 miles a week, frequent high-energy aerobics or triathlon training would be considered excessive for a woman wanting to conceive. Endurance exercises such as these are also believed to alter how your body metabolizes thyroxin, which is linked to the reproductive process. This can adversely affect your body chemistry and cause infertility. Endurance workouts also force you to burn such massive amounts of fat for energy that your estrogen levels can become dangerously low. When this happens, your reproductive system returns to a prepubescent stage, and it can be very difficult to return your reproductive system back to good health afterwards.

Doctors and fitness experts agree that you can obtain great benefits from non-competitive, mildly aerobic activities that condition your whole body, without any undue strain on any particular area. These include: swimming, yoga, tai chi, cycling, dancing, moderate aerobics, walking, stretching, weightlifting, Pilates, tennis, etc. When done in moderation, these activities can help you stay in shape and not disturb delicate body chemistry needed for a healthy conception.

Exercise in moderate amounts has been shown to lower stress levels and thus keep your hormones in balance and your menstrual cycle regulated.

Men are less vulnerable to the side-effects of excessive workouts, but are not immune. Men who do endurance training find a drop in sex drive, testosterone levels and sperm health. Dedicated cyclists risk flattening the artery that brings blood to the penis if they do not use a bike saddle that has a cutout in the middle. Give up bicycle shorts or any snug shorts. Heat is bad for sperm and testosterone production. That also means limiting hot showers, Jacuzzis, saunas, and steam rooms.



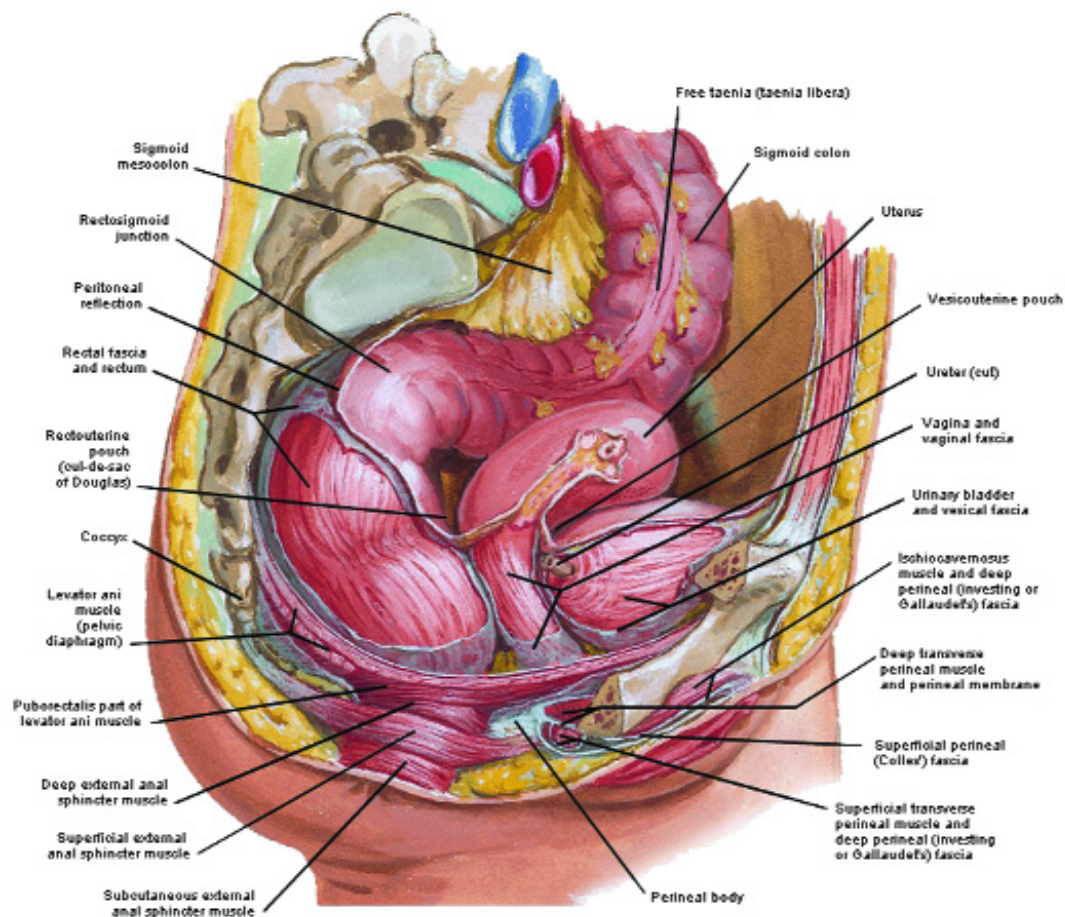
# Pregnancy and the Pelvic Floor

The pelvic floor consists of a sling or hammock of muscles, ligaments and fascia that covers the bottom of the pelvic cavity. The pelvic floor assists in supporting the abdominal and pelvic organs; it maintains continence of bowel and bladder and plays an important role in sexual function. The pelvic floor muscle (PFM) consists of 3 layers, and has fast and slow twitch fibers to assist with supportive and sphincteric properties.

What is the importance of the pelvic floor muscles?

As you prepare to get pregnant, it is important that you strengthen your pelvic floor muscles in order to get them ready to support your pregnancy and prevent problems from occurring later. Over the course of the nine months of pregnancy, a woman's pelvic floor muscles will weaken due to the increased weight of the uterus, and other pelvic organs.

Throughout the pregnancy, hormonal changes allow the ligaments and other support structures in the area to stretch, preparing the body for labor. In the process, the pelvic floor muscles get stretched as well. The trauma of a vaginal birth is yet another factor that affects the muscles' strength. Chronic coughing can also weaken the pelvic floor muscles due to the downward force on the muscles, stretching them out like someone jumping on a trampoline. Also, if you hold your breath while exercising or straining to lift heavy objects, the inhaled air trapped between your diaphragm and pelvic floor will increase the pressure and create a downward force on all of the abdominal and pelvic structures. This can weaken the pelvic floor muscles even further. With weakened pelvic floor muscles, you are more prone to leaking urine when you sneeze, cough, laugh, or participate in athletic activities. It also can lead to a prolapse of the bladder, uterus or rectum. A prolapse is the sagging of the organ into and through the pelvic floor. If severe, you can actually feel like something is hanging or falling out between your legs.



# Weight Issues and Fertility

## Finding Your Ideal Fertility Weight

The female body is at its baby-making best when it is within 15% of your ideal weight. This is the weight range where your body and its hormonal systems run as smoothly as possible. Although it is a highly individualized matter, many women begin experiencing problems when they're less than 95% or more than 125% of that weight.

Being overweight can exacerbate the diagnosis of Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome in women who are prone to this disease, which can be a common cause of infertility. It is not known exactly how excess weight interferes with conception, but it is associated with long gaps between menstrual periods and an overabundance of certain hormones that inhibit ovulation.

Although keeping your weight under control will generally keep your body fat at the right level too, sometimes pounds can be deceiving. Muscle mass weighs more than fat, so it's possible that you might be at the optimum fertility weight, but still be short on sufficient body fat. There are a number of sophisticated laboratory tests for determining body fat levels, but there is a simple way you can make your own determination and monitor body fat levels whenever you want to conceive. The method is called body mass index, or BMI.

Underweight women can stop ovulating, having regular periods or any periods at all. Men with BMI (Body Mass Index) below 18 often have decreased libidos, and their sperm are less active and have shorter lives than men in normal BMI range.

## How to Figure Your Body Type

When looking at any height and weight guide in order to accurately figure out which numbers indicate your correct weight, you must determine if you have large bones or small bones.

Small bones = a wrist measurement of 5 1/2" or less, and ankles 8" or less.  
Large bones = wrist measurement of 6" or more, and ankles of 9" or more.



## Measuring Your Body Fat: What to Do

Using metric system measurements, BMI calculations begin with an accurate reading of your weight and your height. Once you have established these figures, you must convert them to the metric system.

1. To convert your weight from pounds to kilograms, divide the number of pounds you weigh by 2.2.  
For example: Weight, 125lbs.  $\div$  2.2 = 56.8 kg.
2. To convert your height measure from inches to meters, divide the number of inches by 39.4.  
For example: Height 60"  $\div$  39.4 = 1.5 meters.
3. You must then square your height measurement by multiplying it by itself; in this case, 1.5 x 1.5 = 2.25.

To calculate your percentage of body fat, divide your body weight in kilograms by your squared height in meters. The result will be your BMI. For example: 56.8 kg (weight)  $\div$  2.25 (squared height) = 25.2.

The target for successful conception is for the BMI to be between 19 and 25. If your BMI is over 27.5, you need to lose some body fat before you get pregnant in order to be at your ideal BMI and weight. If it is over 31.5, your loss should be medically supervised. If it is less than 19, you need to increase body fat before attempting conception.

# Drugs and Fertility

## Prescription and Illegal Drugs

Marijuana and cocaine are trouble for both partners when trying to conceive, as well as for your body in general. Body-bulking anabolic steroids interfere with sperm production in men.

These are more subtle drugs that may be harmful when trying to conceive:

- Sulfasalazine, a component of some medications for Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Colitis, or Crohn's Disease, has a negative impact on sperm development.
- Cimetidine, the key ingredient in some ulcer drugs, is linked to impotence and semen abnormalities.
- Spironolactone, found in many hypertension drugs, may interfere with testosterone and sperm production.
- Anti-inflammatory drugs, whether prescription or non-prescription, taken at the time of ovulation can decrease embryo implantation.
- Prescription psychotropics can interfere with ovulation.

In many cases, there may be non-prescription alternatives so check with your doctor if this is an issue.

### Smoking and Fertility

Smoking will stunt your procreative capabilities. It poisons gonads (reproductive areas) and can increase susceptibility to sexually transmitted diseases. Smoking increases the likelihood of tubal pregnancies, cervical cancer and pelvic infections. Some studies show that there is a lower success rate among smokers with in-vitro fertilization than with non-smokers.



# Protecting Fertility

## What should I eat, and what should I avoid if I have endometriosis?

According to Dr. Niels H. Lauersen, M.D., PH.D. in his book "Getting Pregnant: What Couples Need to Know Right Now," the growth of endometriosis can be controlled through diet. You should avoid eating the following:

### 1. High fat dairy products

The high fat content in them can stimulate an estrogen overload, increasing the growth of endometriosis. These foods include:

- cream cheese
- high fat yogurt
- cheese
- whole milk
- cream
- ice cream

### 2. Fruit juices

The bioflavinoids in these have been linked to an excess of estrogen.

### 3. Foods containing arachidonic acid (a saturated fat), an essential fatty acid

Foods high in saturated fats can exacerbate inflammatory conditions like endometriosis. These foods include:

- liver
- kidney
- red meat
- butter
- lard

A diet high in complex carbohydrates (grains, vegetables and pasta), chicken and turkey (white meat and skinless), and broiled fish is recommended. There are also studies suggesting that foods containing gamma linoleic acid (GLA), another essential fatty acid, may help counteract the effects of arachidonic acid. GLA can be found in cold-pressed sesame seed or walnut oil. Add 2 tablespoons a day to salads or vegetables. Whenever possible, eat natural foods that you cook, rather than fast foods or pre-packaged items.





# Nutrition Before Pregnancy

Find out how nutritious your diet is by answering the following questions:

1. Is your diet helping prepare you for a viable pregnancy and healthy baby?
2. Do you enjoy at least 5 servings of fruits and/or vegetables each day?
3. Are you eating calcium-rich foods, such as low-fat milk, cheese and yogurt three or four times a day? (except as contraindicated by endometriosis)
4. Are you consuming at least 44 grams of protein daily?
5. Are you eating at least 6 to 11 grains each day?
6. Do you limit or avoid alcoholic beverages?
7. Do you limit vitamin supplements, other than a multi-vitamin?
8. Do you limit caffeinated products (coffee, tea or chocolate) to no more than two per day?
9. Is your weight stable (no more than a two to five pound fluctuation each month, the higher numbers associated with your menstrual cycle)?



If you answered "Yes" to all of these questions, you are one step closer to a healthier pregnancy. If you continue your healthy ways, the dietary transitions needed during pregnancy will be easier for you and you will be more likely to have a healthy baby.

If you answered "No" to any of these questions, you have just identified where to start making changes. Changing eating habits can be challenging, but knowing you are eating with the incentive of providing for your baby can help make the transition.

## Nutrition, Diet, & Fertility

Most people do not realize that by reaching the proper weight six months prior to when you want to conceive, you can significantly increase your ability to get pregnant, and what you eat before conception can significantly impact your fertility as well as your baby's health. Careful attention to the diet in the months before conception can also reduce the risk of birth defects. There is also an important link between your levels of body fat and your reproductive hormones.

While little research on nutrition focuses on fertility, it is generally accepted that how much and what you eat can have an impact on your ability to conceive, and on the health of your baby. Research suggests that the key connection between weight and fertility is your percentage of body fat. Each fat cell in your body is capable of converting androgens to estrogen. Estrogen is one of the key hormones involved in egg production and release. Approximately one-third of your estrogen is produced in your ovaries, and the rest is produced in your fat cells. Complete hormonal shutdown can occur if your body fat falls 10 to 15% below or rises 10 to 15% above the norm of 29%.

Another important factor relating to food and fertility is providing your body with enough energy (or calories). Under-eating alone is sufficient to prevent conception since it can cause you to stop ovulating. Additionally, if pregnancy occurs when caloric intake is low just prior to conception, babies are not only smaller, but their mortality rate is three times higher than that of women who eat sufficient amounts of food.

According to the U.S. Department of Health, your body needs about 2,100 calories to function normally. You will need more calories if you are below your natural weight. Just prior to conception, you may actually need as much as 2,300 calories a day; while once you are pregnant you should be taking in around 2,500 to 2,700 calories a day. This number may be higher if you exercise vigorously.

Just as you need enough food, you must also consume the foods that will provide your body with the nutrients it needs. The first place to start is with folic acid. Take one to two prenatal vitamins a day starting six months prior to when you want to conceive.

# Folic Acid and Other Vitamins

You should start taking folic acid now -- before you get pregnant. Folic acid plays an important role in the development of the fetus' brain and spinal cord, and since this development begins very early in the life of the fetus -- about 30 days after conception -- it's important that you have enough folic acid in your body to facilitate successful brain and spinal cord growth. An insufficient level of folic acid can cause neural tube birth defects, such as spina bifida or anencephaly.

Where do you get it? Folic acid is found in many types of foods, particularly: liver, yeast, green leafy vegetables, legumes, orange juice, oranges, and other citrus fruit, enriched and whole grains such as cereals and breads, oatmeal, and wheat germ.

Many physicians and The March of Dimes recommend taking 400 micrograms of folic acid daily, increasing to 600 micrograms when pregnant. Although folic acid can be found in many foods, they recommend that women, especially those in early pregnancy or planning to become pregnant, supplement their diet with folic acid. Do not exceed 1,000 micrograms per day without your doctor's recommendation.

Sources have recommended taking 1-2 prenatal vitamins per day starting 6 months prior to when you want to conceive. They also recommend having your spouse take 1-2 high-potency multi-vitamins per day at least one month prior to conception.

**WARNING:** Sometimes taking too many vitamins and minerals can be as bad as taking too few, especially after you conceive. Consult your doctor regarding which vitamins and supplements you should take. Your spouse should consult his physician about fortifying his multivitamin with additional supplements. Some doctors recommend the following maximum daily totals:

Vitamin A: 1,000 IU daily  
Vitamin D: 400 mg daily  
Vitamin E: 800 IU daily  
Vitamin C: 1,500 mg daily  
Vitamin B complex: 100 mg daily  
Vitamin B6: 500 mg total daily, balanced with the 100 mg B complex  
Calcium: 800 mg daily  
Zinc: 100 mg daily



Vitamins are critical to the developing fetus. However, you should be aware that excessive vitamin supplementation can cause serious problems for the baby. Please consult your physician before taking ANY vitamins or supplements.

Vegetarians need to take extra care to get sufficient protein when trying to boost fertility. Without it, estrogen metabolizes into inactive products more rapidly, and menstrual cycles become longer.

# Your Eating Plan: The Core Minimum

There is probably a great deal on your mind right now. Major changes in your nutritional intake may not be one of them. The "core minimum" was developed to provide a simple guide for optimal nutrition which also promotes a relaxed approach to eating. Each food group provides interchangeable options, though not necessarily based on caloric equivalents.

The "core minimum" is 4-4-5-9, (4 servings Dairy Protein (increasing to 6 when you get pregnant), 4 servings Beans/Meat Protein, 5 servings Fruits/Vegetables, 9 servings Grains/Starches). The "others" group (fat, sugar, etc.) can be added to further enhance variety and to meet your energy needs. These foods provide calories and flavor with few vitamins and minerals.

Right now, it is preferable to focus on the foods that are nutrient-dense, those that provide your body with many nutrients. Use the "Others" group to flavor your food during cooking, as spreads, dressings or toppings, as dessert (when you want dessert) and to meet additional caloric needs. Again, it is best to select foods from Fruits/Vegetables, Grains/Starches, Dairy Protein and Bean/Meat Protein, in that order, to provide your body with additional nutrients. If you need additional energy (calories), make sure to increase Grains/Starches.



# How Much to Eat

Many people are not aware that your body knows when it is hungry and when it is satisfied. Your body also knows how much food it needs to eat. Unfortunately, we often learn to ignore these signals (especially if we have ever dieted) and listen to our minds instead.

Research is very clear that the mind doesn't do a very good job of helping us maintain a healthy weight. Women who breast-feed have seen this in action. Their baby decides on the exact quantity of milk she/he will drink at any given time. We are all born with this ability. In contrast, women who bottle-feed are more likely to 'interfere' with the baby's intake because they believe a baby has not eaten enough, or has eaten too much. Breast-fed babies who regulate their own intake are less likely to become overweight!

Babies can self-regulate their intake. So can you. If you pay attention to your body and eat when you are hungry (most of the time) and quit when satisfied (most of the time), you will reach and maintain your natural healthy weight. If this is difficult for you, now is a great time to begin exploring eating according to hunger/satisfaction signals and 'tasting' the freedom that can come from not having to use your head or your intellect to figure out how much to eat. "Intuitive Eating" by Tribole and Resch can provide assistance and guidelines.

Many women who have attended countless weight loss groups and struggled for years to reach and maintain their healthy weight have never learned that they can trust their bodies. When they quit following the diet plans and learned to respond to their internal signals, they lost weight.

Learn to trust your wonderfully brilliant body. Eat when you are hungry and quit when you feel satisfied. Free up your time and energy to focus on the next phase of your life – motherhood. A registered dietitian skilled in this work can help you learn to internally regulate your eating.



# What Not To Eat

It is important not to AVOID any food, because that often sets up a craving that can lead to overeating the very food you have been trying to avoid. Instead, select only sweets and fats you REALLY want. Sit down and enjoy the taste and texture, etc. Listen to your body and pay attention to it's feedback. Does the food energize you? Make you feel healthy? Does the food make you groggy? If you get negative feedback when you eat a certain food, try eating less next time. How did that feel? You may want to switch to another food, or eat with full awareness that it has negative consequences. Take this time to listen to your body without judgment. ("I feel disgusting," is judgmental. "I feel uncomfortable" is not, and can lead to a non-judgemental evaluation of the eating experience). When you are open, honest and kind with yourself around food, you will move more easily into the healthy eating habits you seek.

When you know that you can eat any food you want at any time, dessert just doesn't seem so exciting. Ask yourself, "What do I really want, what will really satisfy me." If it is a dessert-type item, ask yourself if what you have eaten has met your minimum daily nutritional requirements for that day. If the answer is no, consider how you can incorporate the foods you need with your sweet tooth. For instance, if you are short on fruits and vegetable...what about sliced banana or grapefruit sprinkled with some sugar? What about pumpkin blended with tofu (adding tofu adds protein to the pumpkin) with sweetener? If eating healthy is a challenge for you, read "Stealth Health" by Tribble to find ways of sneaking nutrition into your diet painlessly.

## Be Cautious Of:

**Caffeine:** Limit caffeine intake to less than 200 milligrams of caffeine daily (one or two cups of coffee). Caffeine is found in coffee, tea and some carbonated beverages, especially colas, and chocolate. Start now to decrease your caffeine intake. To lessen caffeine withdrawal symptoms, taper off your intake over several weeks of sodas, high-sugar fruit drinks and candy.

**Vitamin supplements:** Do not take vitamins other than prescribed prenatal supplements without checking with your doctor. If your doctor has prescribed a prenatal supplement, be sure to take it as directed. Taking it with orange or grapefruit juice, or other foods rich in vitamin C will enhance the absorption of iron in the supplement.

**Artificial sweeteners:** Consider eliminating or limiting your use of these products. Saccharin has been shown to cause cancer in laboratory animals, and aspartame use during pregnancy is still somewhat controversial.

**Swordfish and Shark:** Limit consumption to once a month as swordfish and shark may contain high levels of methyl mercury. Be sure to buy fish and seafood from a reputable source, and cook it thoroughly.

**Alcohol:** More than caution...do not drink alcohol if there is any reason to think you are pregnant.

**Herbs:** Not recommended while trying to get pregnant, most of them are unregulated substances. There is evidence that some can cause problems. St. John's Wort, a commonly used remedy for depression, for example, has an adverse affect on male fertility.



# Make Small Changes

Changing eating habits can be enjoyable and fun. Trying new foods can be an adventure. Knowing that you are providing your body with nutrients and wonderful chemicals such as phytochemicals that can enhance your baby's health, as well as your own, can make it easier.

Rather than focusing on avoiding food and thinking, "I have to eat less fat," focus on what you are eating. "I want to make sure I get in an orange vegetable for the vitamin A and anti-oxidants, and besides, they taste good and I like them."

Make a plan for change. Divide big goals, such as "I will eat healthier foods," into smaller, more specific goals, such as "I will eat at least 2 orange vegetables this week." "I will enjoy at least 5 servings of fruits and/or vegetables each day for this week." Remember, change can be about adding foods, not just taking them away.

Eat according to your body's hunger cues. Enjoy a dessert, and when you do, make sure you have gotten in the minimum amounts of the healthier foods to ensure your baby has a fighting chance for good health. Focus on moderation and balance. Those are boring statements to hear, but in practice, can bring you immense health as well as freedom around your food.

- If you need to lose body fat, eat balanced, nutritious meals of at least 1,200 calories.
- Avoid liquid diets and high-fiber quick-loss products.
- Avoid any diet or exercise program that promotes a very rapid weight loss or gain. Any significant weight change causes a change in hormone production.
- If you need to add body fat, add complex carbohydrates (vegetables, fruit, whole-grain pasta, etc.) rather than high-fat foods.
- Avoid weight-loss or weight-gain products or diet pills.
- Eat at least 46 grams (180 calories) of protein a day. Studies have shown that this can help reduce ovulatory problems.



# Reducing Inflammation Naturally

The FDA describes an anti-inflammatory as a medication to reduce inflammation (the body's response to surgery, injury, irritation, or infection). There are common anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs), such as Ibuprofen, Advil, Motrin, and Aleve, but for those who suffer with chronic inflammation, these can have severe side effects and are not healthy to take on an ongoing basis. How long is too long? It differs. We know if some people take too much for too long that it can have damaging effects, but it could be two weeks for one person, and two months for another. At any rate, if you have to go beyond the directions on the label, you should be under a physician's care.

A quick online search will reveal that although mostly beneficial when taken on a rare occasion to treat headache, fever and mild inflammation, if any of the NSAIDs are taken in higher doses than what is prescribed on their labels, or for any ongoing period of time, the risks can include stomach upset, stomach ulcers which may bleed, kidney damage and liver damage, to name a few. A report in *The Lancet* said NSAIDs actually ate away at joint bone, reducing the success in hip replacement surgery. NSAIDs can increase the risk of cardiovascular problems such as heart attack and stroke, may inhibit your body's natural healing response, and can create stomach ulcers. (Info taken from <http://worstpills.org>)

The better course of treatment for someone experiencing chronic inflammation would be a natural alternative. Do you have chronic inflammation? It is always best to check with your physician if you are uncertain. If you are experiencing chronic pain (pain persisting beyond normal healing time, or for more than 6 months) you are likely experiencing chronic inflammation. Similarly, chronic inflammation is inflammation that persists beyond normal healing time and instead of tissue healing, results in tissue destruction and ongoing pain.

Here is a list of suggestions for reducing inflammation naturally:

## What you should eat:

- Lots of fruits and brightly colored vegetables
- Wild seafood
- Herbs and foods such as turmeric, oregano, garlic, green tea, blueberries, ginger, and goji berries
- Essential fatty acids - omega 3, nuts, seeds (especially walnuts and freshly ground flaxseed)
- A multivitamin
- Glucosamine-chondroitin

## What you shouldn't eat:

- Sugar and refined carbohydrates
- Gluten-containing foods (wheat flour and oats)
- Known allergens

## What you should do:

- Get moving - physical activity daily
- Get resting - meaning you need to relax as well as get a good night's sleep
- Use natural products
- Detoxify your system

## What you shouldn't do:

- Give up - NEVER GIVE UP!!!
- Smoke
- Use stimulants



Following these suggestions may reduce inflammatory processes in your body before coming for treatment, allowing you to respond to the treatment that much better.



# *Clear Passage*

PHYSICAL THERAPY

Hands on Care with Proven Results

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