

Introduction to a Healthy Pregnancy and the Importance of Folate

Why is it so important to have a healthy pregnancy?

- The nutrition that you receive during your pregnancy can affect your baby now and into his or her life. You have the ability to positively influence the life of your unborn child and increase his or her chances of having a healthy life.
- Nearly everything we put into our bodies, good and bad, reaches the baby.
- When pregnant women don't get enough nutrients from healthy foods, their babies are at increased risk of being born too early and even developing heart disease later in life.
- When pregnant women gain excessive weight, their baby is at increased risk of being obese in childhood and into their adult years.

Here are some basic guidelines for having a healthy pregnancy:

- Visit your health care provider for regular checkups. This is important to make sure you and your baby are healthy!
- Choose Fruits, Vegetables, Whole grains, Beans, Lentils, Nuts, Seeds, Lean Meats and Dairy instead of fast food and junk food!
- Stay hydrated by drinking water often!
- It is important to eat regularly. Don't skip meals!
- Avoid Alcohol!
- Try to get adequate rest and avoid stress!
- Take a prenatal supplement as directed by your health care provider!

Folic acid, or folate, is one of the most important vitamins during pregnancy. Folate helps develop the Neural Tube that eventually becomes the baby's spinal cord and brain.

Getting enough folate during pregnancy can also help to prevent cleft lip and palate as well as heart defects. Here are some important facts about folate:

- Intake of folate is particularly important in the weeks prior to conception and during the first 6 weeks after!
- The recommended intake of this vitamin during pregnancy is 600 micrograms!
- Foods high in folate include citrus fruits, dark-green leafy vegetables, nuts, liver, whole grains, fortified grains, beans, peas and lentils!
- The folic acid in vitamins is very well absorbed. Be sure to take your prenatal vitamins!



Overnight Oatmeal Sundaes and
Spicy Black Eyed Pea Soup with Kale

Both are good sources of Folate!



Take Steps Now to Increase the Health of Your Baby and Yourself!

Additional resource: <http://www.mypyramid.gov/mypyramidmoms/index.html>