



Patient Information

Planning for Pregnancy

Do you think you're ready to get pregnant? If so, there are some steps you should follow to help ensure a healthy pregnancy. These include taking a daily prenatal vitamin that contains l-methylfolate, eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly.

Read on to learn how to make your pregnancy — whether it's your first or your fifth — the healthiest it can be.

Why Take Folate?

If you want to get pregnant, it's important to take folate every day before you conceive and during early pregnancy. Folate is a water-soluble B vitamin that can prevent some birth defects. It occurs naturally in foods such as leafy green vegetables, bananas, beans and peas.

Women often get folate in the form of folic acid, which is the synthetic form of folate that is found in supplements and added to fortified foods, such as cereals or grain products.

Since folic acid is synthetic, the body must convert it to the usable, bioactive form of folic acid called l-methylfolate through a four-step process. But studies show that many women's bodies simply cannot convert folic acid to l-methylfolate.

In fact, one study found that 9% of pregnant women can't convert folic acid to l-methylfolate at all. These women get virtually no benefit from taking folic acid supplements. They are at a higher risk for having a baby with a neural tube defect. This occurs when an opening in the brain or spinal cord forms early during the baby's development.

In addition, another 44% of pregnant women can only partially convert folic acid to l-methylfolate.

L-Methylfolate

When women who want to get pregnant take l-methylfolate instead of folic acid, the l-methylfolate does not need to be converted to a usable form. That's because it's already usable. One study concluded that l-methylfolate was more effective than folic acid at increasing folate concentrations and reducing the risk of a neural tube defect.

Néevo is a prenatal vitamin that contains l-methylfolate, as well as other vitamins such as iron, calcium and vitamins B, C, D and E. It is specifically formulated to support preconception and postcon-

ception nutritional needs, particularly for women who are not able to fully convert folic acid to l-methylfolate. It is also formulated for women older than 35, who are considered to have high-risk pregnancies.

Diet and Exercise

Eat a healthy diet to get your pregnancy started off right. Variety is important. Make sure to eat fruits, vegetables and grains, and avoid foods high in fat or sugar. Also, cut back on caffeine.

Regular exercise is important if you want to get pregnant. Unless there is a medical reason not to, try to get at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise on most days of the week. And if you're overweight, reaching a healthier weight may also make it easier to get pregnant.

In addition, exercise may help you avoid gestational diabetes, a type of diabetes that sometimes develops during pregnancy. Exercise also helps build stamina for labor and delivery.

Try activities such as walking, dancing or group fitness classes, and avoid activities that put you at risk for injury, such as horseback riding, downhill skiing or soccer.

What to Avoid

If you smoke, drink alcohol or use illegal drugs, stop now. Any of these habits can cause serious harm to your baby. Smoking may also make it more difficult for you to get pregnant. It's important to avoid secondhand smoke, which can harm to your baby.

All of the following can be dangerous to a pregnancy and should be avoided: stress; uncooked or undercooked meats or fish; hot tubs, saunas and x-rays; chemicals such as insecticides and cleaning products; and cat litter or outdoor areas used by cats.

Get a Checkup

It's important to let your NP know when you are thinking about getting pregnant. She'll help you to stay healthy. During your pre-pregnancy checkup, she'll explain how pregnancy will affect your body, review medications you are taking and make sure you have all the immunizations you need.

Your NP may also test you for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, as well as immunity to some childhood diseases, such as chickenpox and rubella. ❖

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