

Nurture and Family Network have partnered to provide monthly prenatal nutrition and cooking classes to low-income, Spanish-speaking Hispanic women. These classes will continue throughout 2011 thanks to funding from Consumer Wellness Center. The following subjects have been discussed.

A Healthy Pregnancy: The nutrition received during pregnancy can affect baby now and into his or her life. Choose fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, lean meats, and dairy instead of fast food and junk food. It is also important to visit your health care provider for regular checkups, stay hydrated, eat regularly, avoid alcohol, get adequate rest, avoid stress, and take a prenatal supplement as directed by your health care provider.

The Importance of Folate or Folic Acid: Folate helps develop the neural tube that eventually becomes the baby's spinal cord and brain. Getting enough folate during pregnancy can also help prevent cleft lip and palate as well as heart defects. During child bearing years and when pregnant the recommended intake of folate is 600 micrograms which is about 1/3 more than the average adult needs. Foods high in folate include citrus fruits, dark-green leafy vegetables, nuts, liver, whole grains, fortified grains, beans, peas, and lentils.

Eating Breakfast During and After Pregnancy: After not eating for 8 hours or more when sleeping, bodies need to be refueled with high quality energy, vitamins, and minerals that are needed for baby's development. Skipping any meal, but especially breakfast, causes one's blood sugar to be low, which can cause fatigue, nausea, headaches, irritability, and stress. Low blood sugar also makes it harder to make healthy choices so you may be more tempted to turn to junk food that is high in empty calories and lacking in the nutrients you and baby need.

A healthy balanced breakfast contains some or all of the following nutrients: High fiber, whole grains, lean proteins, brain and heart healthy fat, Folate and other B vitamins, Iron, Calcium, Magnesium, Potassium, and many more. Try oatmeal with cherries, raisins, honey, and almonds or a whole grain tortilla with nut butter and banana. Don't limit yourself to breakfast foods: what about an egg with salsa and avocado or healthy leftovers from a prior meal. Plan ahead by using the night before to cut up fruit and vegetables to add to your breakfast or assemble grab-and-go breakfasts for busy mornings.

Getting Adequate Iron during Pregnancy: Iron is a mineral that is an important part of hemoglobin in blood. Hemoglobin is the substance that carries oxygen in the blood throughout the body and to the muscles so they can function properly. Getting sufficient iron helps ensure mother and baby are getting enough oxygen and helps mother avoid symptoms of tiredness, weakness, irritability, and depression.

Eating at least 3 servings of iron-rich foods per day will help ensure pregnant and lactating women get the 30 milligram (mg) per day that is recommended. Iron rich foods include lean meat, poultry, fish, beans and lentils, whole grains, pumpkin seeds, peanut and sun butters, dried fruit, and leafy green vegetables. Consuming iron rich foods with vitamin C rich foods (like citrus fruits and juices, broccoli,

cabbage, and strawberries) increases the absorption of iron. Caffeine can inhibit the absorption of iron so try to avoid it 1 to 3 hours before and after eating iron rich foods or supplements.

Staying Hydrated: Drink plenty of fluids during pregnancy to help maintain energy levels, reduce swelling, and prevent constipation, hemorrhoids, and bladder infections. These conditions are more common during pregnancy. Proper hydration is especially important during the 3rd trimester when dehydration can lead to contractions that trigger preterm labor. Aim for at least eight 8-ounce glasses of fluids a day plus one 8-ounce cup for every hour of light activity. Water is the best beverage in most cases. Milk counts too: strive for regular or skim milk and try to avoid sweetened or flavored milks. Alcohol should be avoided during pregnancy because it can harm your baby. Caffeine containing beverages like coffee, soda, and tea should be limited to no more than 12 oz (1.5 cups) per day as more than that can increase the risk of miscarriage. If you can, try to avoid caffeine during the first trimester of pregnancy.

Managing Stress during Pregnancy: Reducing stress during pregnancy is important since the stress can increase your chances of having pre-term labor or a low birth weight baby. These conditions increase the risk of having complications at birth or poor health later in life. Here are some healthy behaviors to help deal with stress. Eat a healthy diet including foods such as whole grains, lean proteins, fruits, and vegetables that are high in vitamins and minerals like B vitamins, Magnesium, Potassium, Zinc, Iron, Calcium, and antioxidants. Eat every few hours and don't skip meals. When you skip meals your blood sugar drops causing mood swings, fatigue, and possibly stress. Get plenty of rest as fatigue causes stress hormones to be released. Most pregnant women need at least 8 hours of rest per night and may also need a nap during the day. Exercise helps reduce stress. Walking swimming, and prenatal yoga are great options.

Benefits of Breastfeeding to Both Mother and Baby: Breastfeeding strengthens the bond between mom and baby and saves mom time and money. Cleaning baby bottles takes time and energy new moms usually don't have. Formula costs about \$25 a container and baby may need 2 per week bringing the cost to over \$100 per month. Breastfeeding is free and there are no bottles to clean. The immediately noticeable benefits to mom include promoting faster shrinking of the uterus and return to pre-pregnancy weight, reduction of postpartum bleeding, and delaying the return of the menstrual cycle and thus delaying fertility. Long term, moms benefit from decreased risks of breast and ovarian cancers, improved bone density, and reduced risk of a hip fracture, postpartum depression, and type 2 diabetes.

Breastfeed helps baby too. It provides optimal nutrition and is easiest for baby to digest. It enhances baby's immune system protecting against diseases, infections, lower respiratory infections, ear infections, gastrointestinal disease, and many others. It decreases the risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease later in life. It promotes the proper development of teeth, jaw, and speech patterns, decreases the risk of childhood obesity, and increases cognitive function. The composition of breast milk changes over time to provide the optimal nutrients and probiotics based on the baby's age.

During the first 6 weeks babies getting adequate milk should have at least 6 wet diapers and 3 stools a day. It is important to let baby completely finish one breast before offering the second so the baby gets the proper balance of fluid and calories. The foremilk which comes at the beginning of is high in fluid while the hindmilk which comes after a few milks is higher in fat and calories which babies need.

Blood Sugar Control during Pregnancy: If you have any form of diabetes it is important to control your blood sugar when you are pregnant. High blood sugar during pregnancy can lead to high baby birth weight, which may lead to difficult labor and dislocating baby's shoulders during birth. To prevent this, the doctor may want to perform a cesarean delivery. If mom develops gestational diabetes she has a higher risk of developing this during subsequent pregnancies or of developing Type 2 diabetes. Risks for baby include death, abnormalities, and an increased risk of Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity later in life.

Preventing high blood sugar from diabetes during pregnancy can be achieved by exercise and making healthy food choices. Try to exercise most days of the week: walk, play with your kids, use stairs instead of elevators, stretching or do other movements during commercial breaks on TV. Sugars and carbohydrates cause blood sugar to rise, but this doesn't mean a low carbohydrate diet should be followed. If mom did that, her body would produce acids called ketones, which could harm the baby's brain. Focus on eating whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and high-fiber foods. Stay away from simple sugars in foods and beverages (candies, cookies, soda, punch) because they can cause a spike in blood sugar. Eating regular small meals throughout the day will help blood sugar to stay regular.

Getting Adequate Calcium: Calcium works with vitamin D to help build fetal bones and teeth. It plays an important role in developing the heart, nerves and muscles of baby. When mom doesn't get enough calcium, there are not obvious symptoms in the short term because the body will take calcium from your bones in order to meet its needs and the needs of baby. Over the long term, calcium intake below recommended levels can cause low bone mass (osteopenia) and an increased risk of osteoporosis and bone fractures. It can also increase blood pressure of both mom and baby and decrease the concentration of calcium in breastmilk.

Women ages 14 – 18 should get 3000mg/day of calcium. Women 19 -50 need 1000mg/day. During pregnancy calcium absorption is increased so there is no need to consume extra calcium when pregnant. Calcium can be found in a wide range of foods: low-fat milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, other cheeses, kale, broccoli, Chinese cabbage, and sesame seeds. The following foods may be fortified with calcium: breakfast cereals, fruit juices, soy and rice beverages, and tofu. Check product labels to find out if they are fortified.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids: Omega-3 fatty acids, especially the type typically found in animals, are critical for baby's brain and eye development, benefit baby's brain and nervous system development, and lead to higher scores on verbal, visual, intelligence, and attention span tests. The exact amount of omega-3 that women should consume is highly debated, but most women aren't consuming enough. Atlantic salmon and canned light tuna are some of the best low-mercury food sources. Other sources include omega-3

fortified eggs, algae-derived DHA supplements (good for vegetarians), ground flax seed or flax oil, butternuts, walnuts, and kiwi. The FDA recommends that pregnant and lactating women consume less than 12 ounces a week of a variety of fish and shellfish that are lower in mercury. Albacore tuna (white tuna) has more mercury than canned light tuna so limit albacore tuna to no more than 6 ounces a week.