

DIET FOR WOMEN TRYING TO CONCEIVE

The first thing we need to do is change the title to “Women and Men trying to Conceive”.

A lot more is known these days about the importance of preconception care and the role of the father. It is now recognized that the health of your partner is of vital importance. There is nothing more discouraging for a woman trying to conceive than to have her partner continue to drink alcohol and eat junk food while she puts all her attention in to eating a very healthy diet and adopting a healthy lifestyle.

Around sixty years ago research began to discover the role a lack of adequate nutrition had in pregnancy. Since then other researchers have shown that infertility, miscarriage, premature and still birth, prolonged labour, reduced birthweight, inability to breastfeed and poor health in the newborn can be attributed to the lack of sufficient vitamins, minerals, amino acids and essential fatty acids during pregnancy.

It has also been shown that a lack of nutrients during the foetal development of the child affects health not only in childhood but also for the entire adult life.

It becomes very clear that what you feed yourself is what you are feeding your child, and this is the beginning of a healthy life for your baby.

It is ideal to allow three months of healthy eating and lifestyle prior to beginning to try to conceive.

So what exactly is the healthy eating plan that should be adopted by both parties?

First let us look at what should be avoided. All highly refined, nutrient poor foods should go. So that means products that are high in sugar and white flour such as commercial cakes, pastries, biscuits and poor quality bread. Alcohol is a source of empty calories, high sugar as well as the damaging effects of the alcohol itself.

The food to eat is fresh vital food, brimming with nutrients. Obviously organic is best, but this is not always available and can be beyond the budget.

Buy your fresh fruit and vegetables from a fruit and veg store that has good quality produce and a high turnover of stock to ensure you are always getting the freshest you can, and buy every few days to further ensure freshness.

Eat a combination of both cooked and raw vegetables. If you feel you may not be getting quite enough vegetables it can be a good idea to buy a fresh juice. Stick to vegetable juice – a combination of carrot, beetroot and celery is a good one. Don't forget to eat lots of dark green leafy vegetables; these are high in calcium and folic acid.

Eat some wholegrain, brown rice, quinoa and wholegrain such as wheat, barley and oats. A couple of slices of good bread can help with this, and maybe a healthy grain with your dinner.

And what of protein? This is very important, and it is important to eat good quality protein sources. Fish is important for the essential fatty acids, but avoid farmed fish. Chicken yes, but again organic. Red meat is okay, but it may be best to eat only organic red meat although of all the red meats lamb is usually pasture fed and therefore the safest if you can't find organic.

Fresh nuts in small quantities are good protein as are pulses such as dried beans and lentils.

It is safe to eat some cheese such as goats or sheep cheese and yoghurt if you don't have a problem with them.

Your healthy diet will ensure you have a pregnancy glowing with good health and energy and ensure your precious baby is off to the very best possible start.