

Suggestions for Pre-Conception for Women

The impact of poor diet on the reproductive system is dramatic. For optimum fertility, the diet must include a wide variety of foods, especially those rich in the vitamins, minerals, and trace elements that are essential for perfect eggs.

- Beta-carotene and folic acid are vital, as deficiencies of these are closely related to birth defects.
- Eat plenty of seeds and nuts, especially pumpkin seeds, Brazil nuts, and walnuts as these are rich in vitamin E and zinc.
- Eat avocados, dates, fresh and dried apricots, citrus fruits, dark green vegetables, pineapples, bananas, olives, carrots, oats, buckwheat, free-range eggs, oily fish, free-range poultry, and lean lamb or grass-fed beef for good protein, beta-carotene, and folic acid.
- Free-range eggs and/or poultry and organic dairy (if you tolerate it) are important because commercially-raised cows and poultry are given antibiotics, hormones, and other additives that can be harmful.
- Dark green veggies provide a good source of iron.
- Red and orange veggies are a good source of beta-carotene.
- Avoid overly-refined and processed foods as they have minimal nutritional value.
- Avoid excess coffee or teas in the pre-conception period, as well as the pre-natal period: when consumed with or shortly after meals, they inhibit the absorption of minerals.
- Avoid alcohol which is unhealthy for ova and a developing fetus.
- Avoid Vitamin A in doses greater than 10,000 IU per day as levels greater than this can cause birth defects.
- Take a good (preferably food-based) prenatal vitamin that provides at least 800 mcg of folic acid.

The goal is to get your body as healthy as possible before getting pregnant. This not only increases your chances of success conceiving but also sets up the proper developmental environment for the developing baby. Make it a goal to be as healthy as possible: eat organic foods, drink pure water, avoid caffeine, smoking, alcohol, excess sugars, and unnecessary medication. The nutritional demands during pregnancy increase so beginning healthy eating habits before conception makes the transition that much easier.

For more detailed recommendations, I highly recommend the book *Real Food for Mother and Baby* by Nina Planck.