

We are planning a baby – What should we be eating?

“Dear Lynda

We have been married for five years and as my biological clock is ticking ever louder we have decided to start a family. We have two friends who are finding it difficult to conceive a baby and I am concerned it may be the same for us. What can we do to improve our chances of conception?”

Research indicates that many women are having babies later in life. In the UK the number of women giving birth in their forties has doubled in the last 10 years but unfortunately the older the woman is, the less fertile she becomes and after the age of 35 the chances of conception are greatly reduced. Having said this many women including some high profile personalities have successfully had children after the age of 40.

Recently I have been working with two Clients who are now pregnant; one of them had been trying to conceive a baby for a long time. It is really important that you are both in optimum health prior to conception and experts suggest this should be your priority at least four months before you start trying for a baby. This is because the formation of sperm can take up to four months, and eggs can be susceptible to damage as they mature, which is about three months prior to ovulation.

Many people do not realise the importance of eating a healthy balanced diet prior to conception. Eating well helps you maintain an ideal body weight, keeps your hormone levels normal and nourishes your reproductive system. Women who are overweight or underweight may find it harder to become pregnant because body fat levels affect the production of sex hormones.

When choosing your diet ensure you eat foods that are rich in antioxidants, vitamins C and E and certain minerals. I suggest you include the following in your diet.

Folic Acid. Folic acid is important to your reproductive health and also prevents a variety of birth defects including spina bifida. It can be found in green leafy vegetable such as spinach, kale and broccoli.

Iron. Low iron levels have been linked to an increased risk for ovulatory infertility, making it essential when trying to get pregnant. Heme iron, as found in meats, is thought to be most easily absorbed. Iron-rich foods include meat and liver, spinach, kale, lentils, and soy beans.

Calcium. Calcium is important to your health and also helps the proper development of healthy bones and teeth in a developing foetus. Good sources of calcium include milk, cheese, yogurt, and brazil and almond nuts.

Zinc. Zinc keeps your immune system strong, which is essential when trying to get pregnant. Zinc also helps the production of healthy eggs, as well as healthy

sperm. Foods that are rich in zinc include oysters, pecan and brazil nuts, whole wheat, rye and oats.

Fibre. Fibre helps flush toxins from the body, supporting your chances of getting pregnant, and can also reduce the risk of pregnancy complications, like gestational diabetes. Foods that are excellent sources of fibre include all pulses, vegetables and fruit.

I recommend an organic multi-vitamin and folic acid supplement (see my website) which is essential to help regulate embryonic and foetal development of nerve cells, vital for normal growth. The most crucial time for your baby is during the first six weeks of pregnancy. I hope all goes well for you.

Lynda Beetham

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