

## Health - A State of Well Being

Are you having a baby? Conception is the easy part. From then on, the fertilized egg is geared toward producing a living, breathing bundle of joy. When things go wrong, its due to a number of things.

Whenever a baby is born with a birth defect the doctor may not be sure what went wrong. But in about half of birth defects, poor nutrition is believed to be one factor. Nutrients such as protein, calcium, magnesium, iron, and folic acid are the building blocks for a new baby. Studies in the early 1990s showed that folic acid supplement prior to conception could prevent first time birth defects. Dr. William McGanity at the University of Texas says, "Folic acid is important for fetal development, because it's needed for the fetus to make DNA, the genetic material found in every cell."

Early childhood brain cancer is rare, but research suggests that it may be

linked to what the mother ate while she was pregnant. The study showed that the women who ate the most vegetables and fruits, fruit juices, beta-carotene, and vitamin C were less likely to have children with this birth defect.

Eating for your baby means paying close attention to eating right and taking your vitamins. Doctors suggest that pregnant women need extras of just about every nutrient, including vitamins A, B6, D, E, B12, iron, calcium, and zinc to name a few. Most doctors will recommend taking a multivitamin/mineral supplement. As a reminder, women who need the extra supplement the most would be: teenagers, vegetarians, and women who smoke, drink, and take drugs.

Health is much more than the absence of disease and disability. It is a state of well-being, a condition in which we feel vibrant, ener-

gized, and excited to be alive. The keys to optimal health are: Eat right, exercise regularly, get enough rest, manage your stress load, have close social ties, don't smoke or drink, and take precautions against illness and accidents.

Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables rich in vitamin C and beta-carotene. Foods rich in vitamin C are strawberries, cantaloupe, broccoli, cabbage, and dark green leafy vegetables, which have been known to reduce cancers of the stomach and esophagus. Beta-carotene has been known to reduce lung cancer. This can be found in yellow and orange fruits, carrots, sweet potatoes, and squash.

Limit your salt intake. Anyone with a history of high blood pressure, glaucoma, heart disease, or stroke should go light on the salt.

Drink more water. The body is 80% water and this is vital for the body's pro-

cess. We can do without food longer than we can water. I believe people are drinking more water these days than in the past. So, drink it up (water).

Most people find it hard to eat breakfast with the rush to shower, dress, and get ready for school or work. But eating just a small bit of something will help the metabolism so you can function at your best. Build your breakfast around whole grains and bran cereal, fresh fruits, or yogurt. This will help reduce cardiovascular disease. Also, a high fiber diet also helps prevent constipation.

Life is a journey and it's risky. You can eat the most healthful foods, exercise, have a wonderful family, have lots of friends, and still get killed in an accident or have a major disease. Everyday the news tells us of hazards to worry about. But the fact is, the major health risks are well known.

We can take precautions against some of them. That is, if you are interested in living a long and happy life. Understand and know your family medical history. This will take you a long way in preventing some diseases. By becoming aware of your inherited health risks, you can take steps to reduce future problems for yourself.

Chances are you have heard all of this before. In all probability from your mother, spouse, friends, or doctor. Did you know that only *you* already are your own "primary care practitioner?" We still need and love our doctors. We

Take time to be Health Conscious



by B J Armstrong

wouldn't have it any other way, but "taking precautions is a healthful way to look at your life."

*"One time I got so sick...I almost called the doctor."*  
Sam Levinson

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