



***Introduction to a Healthy Pregnancy
&
The Importance of Folate***

Goals:

- *Students will learn the importance of being healthy during their pregnancy.*
- *Students will be able to list some basic guidelines for having a healthy pregnancy.*
- *Students will be able to identify healthy foods containing folate and understand why this vitamin is especially important during pregnancy.*

Audience: Prenatal

Suggested Nurture Recipes:

- Sweet Potato Barley Salad: Rice Cooker
- Spicy Black Eyed Pea Soup with Kale: Slow Cooker (or Vegetable Curry)
- Avocado Bean Dip

Today we are going to talk about the importance of a healthy pregnancy and the importance of one vitamin in particular, folate.

Why is it so important to be healthy during pregnancy?

- The nutrition that you receive during your pregnancy can affect your baby now and into his or her life. **You have the ability to positively influence the life of your unborn child and increase his or her chances of having a healthy life.**
- **Nearly everything we put into our bodies, good and bad, reaches the baby.**
- When pregnant women **don't get enough nutrients** from healthy foods, their babies are at increased risk of being born too early and even developing heart disease later in life.
- When pregnant women **gain excessive weight**, their baby is at increased risk of being obese in childhood and into their adult years.

Here are some **important things you can do to help you have a healthy pregnancy:**

- **Visit your healthcare provider for regular checkups.** This is important to make sure you and your baby are healthy.
- Choose **real, natural foods** like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, lean meats and dairy over fast food and junk food.
- Stay hydrated by **drinking water often.**
- It is important to **eat regularly.** Don't skip meals.
- Avoid Alcohol, uncooked meat and fish, un-pasteurized cheese, processed lunch/deli meat, fish with high mercury content
- Try to **get adequate rest and avoid stress.**
- Take a **prenatal supplement** as directed by your health care provider.

Why is folate so important for pregnant women and how can you be sure to get enough?

- Folic acid, or folate, is one of the most important vitamins during pregnancy. Folate helps develop the Neural Tube that eventually becomes the baby's spinal cord and brain. Getting enough folate during pregnancy can also help to prevent cleft lip and palate as well as heart defects.
- Intake of folate is particularly important in the weeks prior to conception and during the first 6 weeks after.
- The recommended intake of this vitamin during pregnancy is **600 micrograms**. This is 200 micrograms more than the average adult needs. Taking your prenatal supplement and **including folate rich foods at every meal and as snacks** is the best way to get the extra folate you need.
- **Foods high in folate include:**
 - citrus fruits, dark-green leafy vegetables, cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cabbage etc.), nuts, whole grains, fortified grains, beans, peas and lentils.
- The folic acid (folate in the pill form is called folic acid) in vitamins is very well absorbed. Be sure to take your prenatal vitamins.