



Pregnant, or planning to be?

A woman of childbearing age and her partner should be aware of the changes in a woman's body that occur when she is pregnant. Many factors need to be considered such as mental and physical health, nutrition, and habits that may harm the baby. If you are planning to have a baby there are things you, your partner and family can do to help give your child a healthy start even before he or she is born.



Inuit elders remind us that we should be swift and avoid stress as much as possible during pregnancy as it could have an impact on the growing baby. Try to get as much support as you can from family members to help you make changes in your daily habits that can help your child, such as keeping active, eating healthy food, taking extra vitamins, and staying away from cigarette smoke.



Things to do before you get pregnant to have a healthier baby:

- Stop smoking. Smoking could lead to low birth weight, premature birth or even Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.
- Stop drinking alcohol before you get pregnant. Drinking can cause Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder which is a form of brain damage that can last a life time.
- Get a general checkup with your doctor or nurse. Ask them to check for blood pressure, blood sugar levels if you have diabetes, and to look at prescription medication you are taking.
- Consult a midwife, if available.
- See a dentist, if possible, to have a full cleaning or scaling before you get pregnant.
- If you are nearly 40 or older, consult a health-care provider before

deciding to become pregnant, especially if it's your first.

Exercise

Exercise is a great benefit to your health before, during and after your pregnancy. Exercise can help:

- build strong bones and strengthen muscles
- promote a healthy weight and good posture
- increase relaxation and reduce stress.

Remember to talk with a nurse, midwife or doctor before starting any new exercise program.

Folic Acid Supplements

Folic acid helps prevent Neural Tube Defect, a condition that prevents the baby's spine or brain from forming normally. This defect occurs 25-29 days after you become pregnant, at which time many women may be unaware that they are pregnant. If you are planning a

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“I just wanted to say that because everyone was worried about the pregnant one, she was loved. They wanted her to be healthy and not hungry. Pregnant women were pampered very much in our community.”²

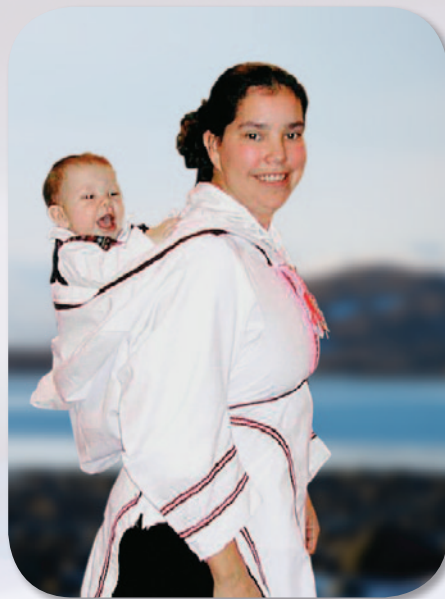
pregnancy or want to be pregnant, start taking folic acid three months before you conceive or as soon as you find out you are pregnant.

Nutrition

It is important to have a balanced diet made up of healthy foods when you are trying to conceive and also while you are pregnant. Eating a selection of country foods, and getting enough vitamins and minerals will help your baby grow. Junk food such as pop, other high sugar foods, chips and deep fried foods do NOT help the baby grow. These foods should be avoided.

Calcium is important for bone and teeth development in the fetus. When you become pregnant your body needs much more calcium to keep up with your own needs and the needs of your baby. A good source of calcium from country

food is char skin and heads, but you can also get calcium from canned salmon, milk and cheese. Low Vitamin D is common for



mothers and infants in polar regions because of the low exposure to sunlight. Your body uses Vitamin D to absorb calcium from food,

to form new bones for your baby and maintain your own bones. Eat plenty of salmon or char because they are an excellent source of Vitamin D. When your baby is born, your nurse or doctor will give you Vitamin D drops for your baby for up to two years.

Country foods are part of a healthy diet for women who plan to be pregnant. They are nutritious and many of the nutrients and good fats you and your baby need are easily found in high levels in country foods.¹ Whenever possible, select country foods that are rich in fatty acids such as Arctic char, caribou, and *misirraq* made from seal blubber.

1 <http://www.accel-capea.ca/pdf/2007/Hands-On%20Inuit/Country%20Foods%20Mothersand%20InfantsHealth.pdf>

2 Siasi Smiler, from the DVD: First Nunavik Midwifery Gathering. Copyright: Nunavik Midwifery Association, producer/distributor: NAHO, 2008.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Planning Your Pregnancy

www.beststart.org/resources/preconception/pdf/men_health.pdf

www.beststart.org/resources/preconception/pdf/BSpre_bro_rev3.pdf

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www.naho.ca/inuit/e/resources/

OTHER RESOURCES:

Our Community Supports Healthy Pregnancies – resources for Inuit

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/pubs/famil/_preg-gros/2007_comm_preg-gros/inuit-eng.php

Facts on Vitamin D

www.naho.ca/inuit/midwifery/english/materials.php

www.cps.ca/english/statements/ii/fnim07-01.htm