

HEALTHY PRE-PREGNANCY WEIGHT - WHY CRITICAL?

Pre pregnancy
and adolescent
series



Achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight before pregnancy is one of the most important first steps to take towards a healthy pregnancy. It is time for you to determine your current body weight status, and decide if you have to shed or put on some kilos or maintain your weight.

Doctors now advise mums-to-be and pregnant women to attain:

- A healthy body weight before conceiving
- Appropriate weight gain during pregnancy to improve their pregnancy outcomes and the future health of their offsprings

Medical research has demonstrated that:

Women who are obese before pregnancy have more than double the risk of still births and death of newborns, compared with women of normal weight.

Kristensen J. et al. (2005). Pre-pregnancy weight and the risk of stillbirth and neonatal death. BJOG;112(4),403-408

MATERNAL UNDERWEIGHT AND MATERNAL UNDERNUTRITION

A woman who is underweight before pregnancy and/or eats poorly and gains inadequate weight during pregnancy

Deprives her fetus of critical nutrients needed for optimal growth and development

The foetus' body responds and adapts (programmed) to reduce its growth rate and to store fat in the body, to maximize his chances of survival after birth

The baby is born with a lower birth weight and if he is exposed to a rich environment (eg a high calorie, high fat diet) in childhood and adulthood

Has an increased risk for cardiovascular disease and diabetes in adult life



Martin-Gronert, M.S., Ozanne, S.E. (2006) maternal nutrition during pregnancy and health of the offspring. Biochem Soc Trans, 34, 779-782
Gluckman, P.D., Hanson, M.A (2007) Developmental plasticity and human disease: research directions. J.Internal Med, 261,462-471

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Breast milk is the best food for babies as it is the sole source of nutrition for the first 6 months of life and is recommended to be continued until 2 years, with introduction to appropriate complementary foods after 6 months of age.

A. Following are the details of advantages, as also nutritional superiority of breast-feeding :

- i)** Immediately after delivery, breast milk is yellowish and sticky. This milk is called as Colostrum, which is secreted during the first week of delivery. Colostrum is more nutritious than that of mature milk because it contains more protein, more anti-infective properties which are of great importance for the infant's defence against dangerous neo-natal infections. It also contains higher level of Vitamin 'A';
- ii)** Breast Milk -
 - a) Is a complete and balanced food that provides all the nutrients needed by the infant (for the first six months of life);
 - b) Has anti-infective properties that protect the infants from infection the early months;
 - c) Is always available;
 - d) Needs no utensils or water (which might carry germs) or fuel its preparations;
- iii)** Breast-feeding is much cheaper than feeding infant milk substitutes as the cost of the extra food needed by the mother is negligible compared to the cost of feeding infant milk substitutes;
- iv)** Mothers who breast-feed usually have longer periods of infertility after child birth than non-lactators;

B. Details of management of breast-feeding, are as under :

- i)** Breast-feeding-
 - a) Immediately after delivery enables the contraction of the womb and helps the mother to regain her figure quickly;
 - b) Is successful when the infant suckles frequently and the mother wanting to breast-feed is confident in her ability to do so;
- ii)** In order to promote and support breast-feeding the mother's natural desire to breast-feed should always be encouraged by giving, where needed, practical advice and making sure that she has the support of her relatives;
- iii)** Adequate care for the breast and nipples should be taken during pregnancy;
- iv)** It is also necessary to put the infant to the breast as soon as possible after delivery;
- v)** Let the mother and the infant stay together after the delivery, the mother and her infant should be allowed to stay together (in the hospital, this is called "rooming-in");
- vi)** Give the infant Colostrum as it is rich in many nutrients and its anti-infective factors protect the infants from infections during the few days of its birth;
- vii)** The practise of discarding Colostrum and giving sugar water, honey water, butter or other concoctions instead of Colostrum should be very strongly discouraged;
- viii)** Let the infants suckle on demand;
- ix)** Every effort should be made to breast-feed the infants whenever they cry;
- x)** Mother should keep her body and clothes and that of the infant always neat and clean,