



Eating healthfully while you are planning to conceive is key to successful and healthy pregnancy. In fact, it is a “gift” that you can give to yourself and your unborn child, as, it helps to:

- Fuel your fertility by promoting a healthier menstrual cycle
- Reduce the chances of miscarriages
- Get you to eat sensibly and achieve a healthy body weight
- Ensures a balanced diet thereby meeting nutrient requirements




◉ When to start eating healthfully?

Healthcare professionals now recommend that couples, especially women, who plan to become pregnant, to eat well at least 3 months prior to conception

◉ Some Crucial Nutrients:

Following are some of the key nutrients that you need to pay special attention to in your pre pregnancy diet



Function	Nutrients	Sources
Folic Acid	Key role in cell growth and development, esp important during 1st 12 weeks of pregnancy – to protect baby against Neural tube defects	Legumes, green leafy vegetables, citrus fruits and juices, fortified cereals 
Iron	Helps prevent iron deficiency anemia and protect against infections	Amaranth, cauliflower green, colocasia, garden cress seeds, til seeds, Bengal gram, sea food like shrimps, scallops, crab, oysters etc
Zinc	Critical role in cell reproduction, sexual maturation, promotes tissue growth and repair, strengthens immune system	Oyster, crab, shell fish, milk, yogurt, eggs, wheat bran, nuts, beans, peas, lentils 
Calcium	Builds and maintains strong bones and teeth, helps heart, muscle and nerve to function healthily	Milk and Milk products like yogurt, cheese, soya bean, til seeds, sunflower seeds etc
Vitamin D	Required for bone growth and development	Fortified milk and milk products, fish and eggs
Omega 3 fatty acids	Plays a crucial role in brain function, promote normal growth and development and may improve pregnancy outcomes	Cold water fishes like salmon, tuna, sardines; flax seeds, walnuts, canola oil, soyabean oil etc 

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,