

# Foothills Midwifery

## List of Suggested Natural Supplements in Pregnancy

### **From Conception onward Prenatal Vitamin**

Taking a good quality multivitamin/multimineral while you are pregnant is very beneficial to both you and your growing baby. It has been shown to reduce the incidence of high blood pressure in mothers, decreases the risk of birth defects for babies and has been linked to a decrease in childhood cancer rates. If you are nauseous in the first trimester and can't tolerate a multivitamin try to add it back into your diet as soon as you feel better.

### **Iron**

Iron deficiency is the #1 complication of pregnancy and studies have shown that only 1 in 5 women start their pregnancy with adequate levels of iron in their blood. Iron is found on our red blood cells and is necessary to help carry oxygen to all the cells in your body. During pregnancy your blood volume increases and red blood cells becomes diluted by 50% thus iron levels normally decrease. This is why it is so important to maintain good stores.

If your midwife suggests that you may have reduced stores of iron you should consider a supplement. We recommend **Floridix** as a first line supplement. It is easy absorbed by your body and does not cause any complications of more concentrated iron supplements. For more info regarding Floridix visit: <http://www.florahealth.com/> *Dosages:* Take 10-25ml in a small glass of juice twice a day away from dairy or caffeine.

### **Vitamin D**

Vitamin D is essential for absorption of calcium; it helps to regulate our sugar metabolism (insulin) and supports a healthy immune system. Vitamin D is most often obtained through exposure to the sun or through fortified dairy products. Children born to mothers low in Vit D show lower bone masses and growth by age 10. Low levels have also been linked to the onset of preeclampsia and gestational diabetes. *Dosages:* 1000IU/day

### **Essential Fatty Acids (EFA)**

Essential fatty acids are 'essential' because they are required by the body for growth and development and must be obtained from the diet.

There have been numerous new studies that have been researching the benefits of EFA supplementation in pregnancy. Most of the research suggests that the best EFA for pregnancy is DHA, an omega-3 fatty acid found mostly in fish oils. Studies have linked DHA supplementation

with an increase in infant IQ, improved social behavior, improved vision and hearing, and a reduced risk of eczema.

DHA has been shown to also be helpful to mothers with demonstrated reductions in the rates of preterm labour, preeclampsia and enhanced immune function.

*Dosages:* Finding a blend of DHA/GLA is best but not necessary. Aim for 1-2g/day

### **From 28 weeks to term Raspberry Leaf Tea/tablets**

Raspberry leaf tea has been used for generations as a uterine tonic (helps to tone the uterus) and aid in the preparation for childbirth. Several midwifery led studies have demonstrated that women who begin taking raspberry leaf between 28 and 34 weeks in their pregnancy had a shorter labour with no identified side effects for the women or their babies. Women were also found to require an artificial rupture of membranes, caesarean section, forceps or vacuum birth less often than women who did not use the preparation. *Dosages: Tablets:* 2 300-400mg tablets with meals from 32 weeks onward *Tea:* 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester: 2 cups a day 3<sup>rd</sup> trimester: 4-5 cups a day. Let the tea steep for 10-15 mins.

### **Probiotics**

The world health organization defines probiotics as, "Live microorganisms which when administered in adequate amounts confer a health benefit on the host". Probiotic use in pregnancy is has been shown to be beneficial in many applications:

- Improve immune function specifically, reducing the risk of urinary tract infection and hospital acquired infections

  - Decrease gastrointestinal upset (constipation and diarrhea)

  - Improve absorption of beneficial fatty acids and nutrient from our diet

  - Shown to reduce the risk of swabbing positive for Group B Strep at term (ask your midwife about this test or refer to the GBS section of the website)

  - Help maintain a proper vaginal pH, prevent and help cure yeast infections and bacterial vaginosis

Probiotics exist in many strains. Most of the probiotics beneficial to our intestinal is found in high quality yogurts and have names like *Lactobacillus acidophilus* health and *Lactobacillus casei*. Strains found to target the female lower genital tract and aid in digestion includes names such as, *L rhamnosus* GR-1, *L reuteri* RC-14, and *Saccharomyces boulardii*. If you visit your local health food store do some label reading and see what you can find.

*Dosages:* for digestive health and possible prevention of GBS at term take 2-3 times a day from 28-30 weeks onward. Natures Way Primadophilus® Reuteri supplies both Rhamnosus and

Reuteri. It can be taken in capsules which should stay in the fridge or 'pearls' which are shelf life stable and don't have to stay in the fridge. (P.S. I'm not paid by nature's way..ha ha)

## **Evening Primrose Oil**

Evening primrose is a plant native to North America, but it grows in Europe and parts of the Southern Hemisphere as well. It has yellow flowers that bloom in the evening. Evening primrose oil contains gamma-linolenic acid (GLA), an essential fatty acid.

Evening primrose oil has been shown to reduce inflammation, balance hormone levels and be beneficial for hair and nails. Evening primrose oil contains natural prostaglandins, a substance necessary for the 'ripening' of the cervix. Many midwives use Evening Primrose Oil towards the end of pregnancy to help soften the cervix and prevent the incidence of going past your due date. *Dosage:* 500-1000mg twice daily from 36-38 weeks; 500-1000mg three times daily from 38-40 weeks; 39-42 weeks continue oral dosage and clip the end off a capsule at night to use as a vaginal suppository (if your adventurous)

## **For Birth and Postpartum Arnica**

This is a homeopathic preparation that aids with swelling, bruising and tissue healing. It will be beneficial to take right after birth and for the first week postpartum. *Dosages:* Take three times a day or as often as you like. Remember, like all homeopathics, the pellets should dissolve under your tongue and they should be taken away from food or any taste in your mouth (eg. Gum/toothpaste)

## **Calendula**

Calendula helps tissues to heal. It has anti-bacterial, anti-viral and anti-inflammatory effects.

*Dosage for moms:*

A few drops added to peri bottle in the first few days postpartum • Soak a sanitary pad in calendula mixture of tincture + water. Toss it in the freezer then enjoy....

*For baby:*

A few drops on the umbilical cord three times a day to help healing

Continue to take your prenatal vitamins, EFAs and iron....they will aid in postpartum recovery and speed healing.