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Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2013

Pre-Conception Wellness

Deciding to have a baby is one of the most important decisions you'll ever make. Or is it? Truthfully, the most important decision you'll ever make for that baby is to prepare your body in advance for the important job that it will do.

Birth Control

Studies have shown that roughly 40% of all women are using the pill. Many are doing so for non-contraceptive reasons. For instance, to regulate their period or decrease the severity of the symptoms of premenstrual syndrome. Regardless of why they're taking it, many women are under the impression that as soon as they're ready to get pregnant that they have only to quit taking the pill and within a month or two they'll conceive. While this may be the case for some, it is not the case for most.

First, doctors recommend waiting at least 2 or 3 months after stopping the pill before even attempting to get pregnant. The typical reason given is to allow the body to return to its normal hormonal rhythms, though there really is no research regarding what possible effects the extra hormones may have on a developing fetus.

Secondly, women on the pill have spent months (and sometimes years) convincing their body that they're pregnant for 21 days out of the month. Then for the 7 days they're taking the placebo they experience a sudden decrease in hormone levels which causes their body to menstruate. It's important to realize that normally the body creates an egg and then the menstrual period is caused by that egg not being fertilized; this is not the case for the woman

taking an oral contraceptive. While taking the pill the body is convinced not to create an egg and the period is caused merely by a sudden drop in hormone levels.

After spending months or years not creating an egg, it can take anywhere from 6 months to 2 years before some women will be able to conceive. In roughly 10% of cases, a woman will never conceive after having taken the pill.

Other Drug Use

Because more than half of all pregnancies are unplanned, it has been estimated that more than a million babies have been exposed to drugs in the first or second month of pregnancy.

A study performed by Boston University and reports from the Centers for Disease Control in 2011 showed that 70-80% of pregnant women have reported taking at least one medication. The concern with this is that 90% of medications approved by the US Federal Drug Administration from 1980-2000 had insufficient data to determine if they were safe to take during pregnancy.

While many women are being prescribed these specific medications, studies have not been done to determine if these chemicals will cross the placenta and how they may affect the fetus.

Between 2010 and 2012, studies have reported that not only is antidepressant use during pregnancy on the rise but their use has been linked to birth defects. Additional studies have shown that children whose mothers took Zoloft, Prozac and similar antidepressants were twice as likely to have a diagnosis of autism or other related developmental disorders.

Preparing Your Body

While having a baby is the most natural thing in the world, just like most other areas of this industrialized culture we live in, convenience can sometimes interfere. Processed foods, caffeine, aspartame, high fructose corn syrup and chemicals for depression and contraception have all affected our bodies and potentially

caused areas of concern.

That's why before considering conception it's important to make a few lifestyle changes to ensure that your pregnancy has the best chance of success.

Avoid the Chemicals

Not only are chemicals unhealthy for you but there have been links between many food additives and pregnancy risks. For instance, an American Journal of Clinical Nutrition study published in 2010 concluded that a daily intake of artificially sweetened soft drinks may increase the risk of preterm delivery. In addition, when aspartame, commonly known as NutraSweet, is consumed during pregnancy it may potentially contribute to autism and spina bifida.

Another concern is caffeine. Studies have shown that it crosses the placenta and can cause birth defects. Additionally, it can actually reduce fertility or delay conception. But perhaps the greatest concern is that two studies in 2008 showed that women who consume 200mg or more of caffeine are twice as likely to miscarry.

Since over half of pregnancies are unplanned, it's wise for all women of childbearing age to reduce their caffeine intake. Just 2 cups of coffee contains almost 200mg of caffeine.

Healthy Eating

What a woman eats is the fuel her body uses to help her fetus develop, so make sure that it is only the healthiest and most nutritious foods are being consumed. First, be sure that you're eating organic as much as possible. The chemicals and pesticides used on commercially grown foods have not been tested for the affect they may have on your fetus. Genetically modified foods should be avoided as well since they have not been tested either.

Besides eating organic, eating six small meals a day is ideal. Be sure to drink at least 8 glasses of water; natural spring, not purified or tap. And be sure that you're getting at least 5 servings of vegetables and that healthy fats are in your diet.

The omega fatty acids are critical for fetal development, with Omega-3 being especially important for neurodevelopment. Omega-3s are found in seafood, flaxseed oil, nuts, seeds, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower and winter squash.

Omega-6s are in flaxseed and grapeseed oil, pumpkin and sunflower seeds, and pine and pistachio nuts. Omega-9s are readily available in olive oil, avocados, almonds and most other varieties of nuts. It's important to try to consume some of each of these fatty acids each day.

Exercise

If you already have a healthy exercise regimen then continue on that track in preparation for your pregnancy. If you do not already exercise regularly then now is the time to start. It's been shown that women who are not physically active prior to conceiving will not develop an exercise program after conceiving. Even just walking 15 minutes out and back each day, 5 days a week, is a great start. Then gradually increase by 5 minutes until you're walking an hour a day. Walking has been proven to be beneficial for heart and joint health as well as has proven metabolic benefits.

The Chiropractic Factor

Your Doctor of Chiropractic is an excellent source of information for developing a wellness lifestyle prior to conceiving. Take a moment to talk to your Family Wellness Chiropractor today about a pre-conception consultation at least six months prior to conceiving. Some minor changes today could mean all the difference to your unborn baby.