



MATERNITY & BABY CARE

Keys to a smooth pregnancy

Moms-to-be, did you know that what you consume during pregnancy has a huge impact on your pregnancy and your baby's health?

“**N**utrition and other lifestyle factors during the early periods in the lifecycle—from just before conception to the first few months after birth—can have profound effects on a baby's health at birth, during childhood and even into adulthood,” says Naturopathic Dr. Ardyce Yik from Integrated Medicine Institute (IMI).

To start, Dr. Yik advises pregnant moms to eat a variety of wholesome foods including those rich in good healthy fats. “DHA is essential for proper brain growth and eye development in fetuses and young infants. Visual function is enhanced even up to 13 years later in children exposed to high amounts of DHA in the womb,” she explains. “Not only that, but recent studies have found that daily maternal supplementation of DHA can reduce pregnancy-related complications such as pre-term birth. Food sources of DHA include omega-3 eggs, salmon, cod, herring, sardines and other oily fish. DHA is also found in seaweed but in very small quantities.”

Also, according to Dr. Yik, new research shows that women who take vitamin D during pregnancy reduce their risk of pregnancy-related complications, including pre-term birth, gestational diabetes and infection. “One study showed that taking 4000IU of vitamin D daily during the second and third trimesters showed no evidence of harm, but halved the rate of pregnancy-related complications compared to women who took only 400IU. Even so, it is important to talk to your obstetrician or naturopathic doctor before taking any vitamins or supplements during pregnancy.”

Probiotic supplementation during pregnancy also has several benefits, says Dr. Yik.

Infants are born with a completely sterile gut, so they receive their first dose of beneficial bacteria from their mom when they pass through the birth canal and from nursing. Children

with healthy intestinal flora have a lower risk of ear infections and illness in the first few years. Furthermore, studies show that supplementation during pregnancy can reduce the risk of allergies and eczema. One study shows when women take probiotic supplements during pregnancy, their babies are 40% less likely to develop eczema compared to women who didn't.

As for food to avoid, Dr. Yik advises moms-to-be to stay away from processed foods which have low nutritional value but high chemical additives. Also, since pregnant women are more susceptible to foodborne illnesses, it is best to avoid raw eggs, raw seafood, undercooked or possibly contaminated meats, for example hotdogs and deli meats. Shark, swordfish and king mackerel during pregnancy should be also avoided because they contain high levels of methylmercury, which are toxic to the nervous system.

Dr. Yik has been supporting pregnant women by providing safe, effective, natural alternatives for symptoms during pregnancy including morning sickness, colds and flus, digestive upset, insomnia, poor sleep, fatigue, skin conditions such as eczema flare-ups, recurrent urinary tract infections and many other health ailments.

If you are interested in finding out more about natural pregnancy care by Dr. Yik and her colleagues at IMI, visit: www.imi.com.hk/pregnancy-childbirth.html



Naturopathic Doctor Ardyce Yik
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