When Having a Baby, Don't Eat Gravy

By Cori Lucius

So you've just found out the exciting news; you're having a baby! It will now be your job to not only feed yourself, but to also meet the needs of your unborn baby. Now what exactly should you or should you not eat? Are there certain foods that will increase the chance of a healthy and easy-going birth? Let's start with what foods you may want to stay away from when gearing up for pregnancy.

When creating a new diet plan know that it is not only the actual foods that must be considered. Three harmful things found in common foods are mercury, listeria and toxoplasma. Mercury is a metal found at high levels in certain fish. Listeria is a bacteria that grows in refrigerators and Toxoplasma is a parasite that thrives on raw meats and unwashed fruits and vegetables. (1) It is obvious that when pregnant you should avoid these toxic elements in your food. It is important to stay clear of raw or undercooked meat, poultry, fish or shellfish. This means you must put down the sushi rolls! Avoid eating refrigerated smoked seafood, (salmon, whitefish, mackerel) and meat spreads.

Although milk does a body good and builds strong bones, do not consume raw or unpasteurized milk when pregnant. Soft cheeses are another food to include on your "do not eat" list. Do not consume cheeses such as feta, brie, camembert, or panela unless they are pasteurized. Try to stick to skim or non-fat milk to acquire the daily calcium needs without the fat content. Lastly, you are going to have to give up those cold processed lunch meats! I realize Americans love their ball games and hot dogs; however, it may not be the best food choice for your unborn baby. Remember to not become scared of food in general. Pregnant women can still consume the right kinds of pasteurized milk and cheeses, cleaned fruits and vegetables, cooked fish, and prepared meats.

Now that we've gone over the wrong foods to eat when pregnant, let’s get to the good stuff! As with any other human being, your baby needs the proper nutrients to become a healthy and active child; even before birth. It is essential that pregnant women take in 400 to 600 micrograms of folic acid every day. This amount can be obtained from taking a vitamin or by eating foods such as sunflower seeds, peanut butter, beans, spinach, broccoli, potatoes, nuts and corn. Just to name a few! (2). When pregnant, women should eat 7 or more servings of fruit and vegetables combined. This is because fruits and vegetables are good sources of fiber, minerals, and nutrients such as vitamins C and A, folate and iron. Whole grains such as enriched pasta, bread and cereal contain iron, B vitamins, minerals and
fiber. It is important that women who are pregnant eat anywhere from 6 to 9 servings of whole grains each day.

Remember how milk makes one’s teeth and bones strong? The same message applies to a mother and her unborn child. Consuming up to 1,000 milligrams of dairy products provides a mother and her baby with the necessary amount of vitamins A and D, B vitamins and protein. When choosing dairy products select low fat or nonfat or turn to dark green leafy vegetables or tofu for calcium. As for calcium, a pregnant woman should be taking in about 1,000 milligrams of calcium a day. And finally we arrive at the subject of meats. Pregnant women should eat two or more 2-3 ounce servings of protein-rich food. (1) Proteins help the body to build muscle, tissue, enzymes, hormones, and antibodies for you and your baby to fight an infection. Choose meats that are low in fat such as lean meat, fish, or chicken without the skin. Iron is another essential nutrient to be absorbed during pregnancy. While pregnant, a woman should consume about 30 milligrams of iron a day. (1) The increase in iron helps to keep an increased blood supply during pregnancy healthy. If too little iron is consumed, the mother may develop anemia.

Another key ingredient to a healthy pregnancy is water. Yes, water. It seems obvious that anyone should be drinking 6-8 glasses of water a day however, it is essential for pregnant women. Water helps to carry nutrients from the mother’s food to the baby and also prevents dehydration of the mother. Do not consume alcohol while pregnant. Alcohol will enter the baby’s bloodstream through the umbilical cord and can cause birth defects, brain damage, and slow growth. As for caffeine, it is a stimulant that causes irritability and nervousness and is a diuretic. Not to mention, it sometimes causes a low birthweight in babies. Some believe it is okay to consume small amounts of caffeine while others believe it should be avoided all together. When creating a diet plan for pregnancy, just be smart! If a certain food isn't that healthy to you regularly or doesn't contain an abundance of vitamins and nutrients, don't eat it! Stick to healthy lean foods that promote growth and well-being. Being pregnant doesn't mean "eating for two" in the sense that one should obtain twice the calories of whatever they please. Pregnant women should only be eating about 300 more calories a day than when on a regular diet plan. Bring your baby into a healthy and happy world!

References