

health: wellbeing

PREPARING FOR THE EXPECTED

Accredited practising dietitian and mother Vanessa Schuldt says planning a pregnancy means much more than deciding where you'll put the cot



I never thought I'd morph into a "nutrition nazi", but it happened – the day my hubby and I decided to try for a baby. I turned all my pre-conception nutrition knowledge on myself with gusto in the hope of giving my "maybe-baby" the best possible start in life.

Nutritionally priming your body for pregnancy increases your chances of a successful pregnancy and of having a healthy infant, so start practising these nutritional essentials before you start sweet-talking your partner.

TAKE FOLATE This B-group vitamin, found in leafy green vegetables, wholegrain breads, cereals and legumes, is also available as folic acid tablets. Insufficient intake could cause a neural tube defect (NTD) such as spina bifida (a spinal cord

defect) in the growing foetus. Research has shown 70 percent of NTDs can be prevented by eating a folate-rich diet and taking a supplement (0.5mg) daily for at least one month prior to conception, continuing for the first three months of pregnancy. Women with a family history of NTDs will require higher amounts, as prescribed by their doctor.

AVOID MERCURY Fish is highly nutritious, but some varieties should be limited due to a higher mercury content, as high intakes can damage the nervous system. Pregnant women and those planning pregnancy are advised the following, where one serve equals 150g:

- Two to three serves per week of any fish (fresh or canned) not listed below; or
- One serve a week of orange roughy (deep sea perch) or catfish, and no other fish eaten

that week; or

- One serving per fortnight of shark (flake) or of billfish (swordfish/broadbill or marlin) with no other fish eaten that fortnight.

LIMIT ALCOHOL Australian guidelines recommend women planning pregnancy limit alcohol or consider not drinking at all. If you choose to drink, limit your intake to seven standard drinks over a week, having no more than two drinks on any given day, spread over two hours or more. Most importantly, avoid becoming intoxicated.

NUTRITION BOOSTERS Get into healthier eating habits, choosing a variety of nutritious foods, particularly fresh vegetables, fruits and wholegrain foods, as requirements for vitamins and minerals increase in pregnancy.



QUIET TIME

Think you've got no time to meditate? Think again – a mere 20 minutes will get you started. The Five Point Star meditation technique was

created by mum Tamy Starr to be both accessible and practical for everyone. Starting with the 20-minute *Guided Meditation*, learn to reconnect with your breath – a simple, go-anywhere tool to reinstate balance and calm in the most hectic day. Continue with *Self Awareness*, *Body Awareness* and soon to be released *Relationships* and *Children*. Go to fivepointstar.com.au.

KEEP YOUR COOL THIS SUMMER

During the warm weather, fluid retention in pregnancy is common. Areas prone to swelling include the backs of knees, ankles and lower-leg area. Citrus essential oils, such as lemon, grapefruit and tangerine, known for their vaso-constricting properties (helping to strengthen and tighten the vein walls), may be useful when applied as an exfoliant, or in a massage oil or soothing lotion.

Try this luxurious and organic Hot Mamma recipe by Catherine Arfi, aromatherapist and founder of Aromababy. She calls it her "Pina Colada in a jar". Use only organic ingredients wherever possible.

1 Combine one cup each of organic shredded coconut, raw sugar and edible grade vegetable oil like sunflower, or use a natural baby massage oil. Add in half a cup of organic brown sugar plus one tablespoon of grated, organic pineapple and coconut cream. Add 10 drops each of organic grapefruit, orange

and lemongrass essential oils along with five drops of pettigrain (or mandarin).

2 Blend ingredients well and apply to your body in a circular motion before having a shower. It's best to apply this sitting down in the shower before turning the water on, preventing slips. It will also help take pressure off tired legs and feet, and enables you to scrub the soles of your feet.

3 Store this home-spa organic body scrub in the fridge. It should keep for up to four weeks, and this recipe should provide enough for at least three full-body applications.

Visit aromababy.com and purespa.com.au for more Hot Mamma ideas.

