

# Prenatal Nutrition

Contributed by Dr. Paul G. Jensen  
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When a baby is brought to my office with health problems, the first thing I look at is the health of his/her mother. If the mother is nutritionally depleted, the developing fetus cannot be expected to have optimal health. Many mothers have the impression that all they need to do is take vitamins once they find out that they are pregnant. Vitamins will not compensate for a poor diet. In addition, the most critical time to consume extra nutrients is well before getting pregnant. For example; Neural tube defects occur between the twenty-first and twenty-seventh day after conception. Many mothers do not even know they are pregnant by day twenty-one, at which point it would be too late to compensate for the lack of nutrition.

Relying on vitamins for prenatal nutrition has other problems as well. For example, a study reported in the New England Journal of Medicine showed that synthetic vitamin A can cause birth defects (no birth defects were reported from consuming vitamin A rich foods).

While most American mothers have plenty to eat, most of what they are eating has very little nutritional value. As a result, the nutrients for proper development are in short supply, causing certain organs and systems of the baby to be weak, making the child more susceptible to illness and disease. This short supply of nutrients also takes its toll on the mother during pregnancy. For example, if there is not enough dietary fatty acids to supply the fetus, the growing baby will remove these from the mother's brain (which is high in essential fatty acids). Consequently the mother can lose up to 5% of her brain weight in her last trimester, a major cause of post partum depression.

In the 1930's, Dr. Westin Price studied the health and eating habits of fourteen different isolated societies who lived entirely on traditional local foods. Dr. Price was interested in these groups because nearly every member of their tribe or village enjoyed superb health. Infertility and miscarriage was virtually non-existent and their children were free from modern disease, dental problems and mental illness. Years later, as these same societies became industrialized they changed their traditional eating habits and began eating modern foods (refined grains, canned and processed foods, pasteurized milk and sugar). New studies of these same societies showed that the mothers now have problems with miscarriage and infertility and many of their children have crooked teeth, rampant tooth decay, deformities, degenerative diseases, diabetes, allergies, learning disabilities and mental illness. All of which were almost non-existent before they changed their diet. Nutritional pioneers like Dr. Price recognized the growing problems with the modern American diet decades ago, unfortunately the powerful food processing industry continues to put our children's future at risk by promoting nutritionally depleted foods as being healthy.

For further information on Pediatric issues, see the "pediatric" section on this website or visit this website:  
[www.westonaprice.org](http://www.westonaprice.org)

## References:

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