

STEPS TO BEING ULTRA FIT AND ULTRA HEALTHY DURING PREGNANCY

BECOMING PREGNANT IS THE MOST WONDERFUL THING THAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME SO FAR! RECENTLY IT FELT LIKE I GAVE BIRTH WHEN WE FINALLY RELEASED THE BOOK THAT I CO-WROTE WITH MY HUSBAND '7 THINGS YOUR DOCTOR FORGOT TO TELL YOU' (ROCKPOOL PUBLISHING, WWW.7THINGS.COM.AU), THOUGH THE PROCESS TOOK 3 YEARS AND THERE WERE NO CONTRACTIONS, IT WAS DEFINITELY A LABOUR OF LOVE AND ONE I GOT TO SHARE WITH THE MAN I LOVE: DR WARREN SIPSER, A SOUTH AFRICAN-BORN PARAMEDIC WHO BECAME A PAEDIATRIC CHIROPRACTOR AND SHARES WONDERFUL INSIGHTS INTO WHAT HEALTH IS AND HOW TO ACHIEVE IT. I FELT COMPELLED TO SHARE WITH THE WORLD, MUCH LIKE A NEW MOTHER.

By Andi Lew



Now, just months later, we have really given birth. Due on January 4, Beaudy (Beau) Shae Sipser came a day early, on January 3, our own little Capricorn to love. I never realised I would enjoy pregnancy so much.

It can be so much easier than what some say they experience, and as my husband always says; "Health happens by choice, not by chance!" At 36, one would say that I am less fertile or that it should be a little harder to enjoy pregnancy. I'm healthier than ever before because of the choices I made years ago and pre-pregnancy. If you follow these '7 Things' you too may be able to enjoy pregnancy so much and defy all the odds.

MORNING WELLNESS

We've all heard of the term 'morning sickness'. In fact it can be the one thing that women claim time and time again - they don't look forward to when being pregnant. They sometimes complain more about this than the birthing process itself! For some it can be a very challenging time, but what if the reason you have morning sickness is because you are actually well? What if it's because your hormones are really strong and working well? Let's call it morning wellness now and as well as changing our perception of what it is, discover how we can minimise symptoms.

Consider it a 'cleanse and eat clean phase' – Some research has suggested that the act of vomiting whilst pregnant is actually a way of bringing up something you have ingested that your baby doesn't like, in order to protect it. During my first trimester, I only ate fresh food and hardly any packaged food containing preservatives. My body was telling me that this new human growing inside of me wanted only high-quality nutrition. Eating simple, clean and even organic foods ensured that I was giving the growing baby excellent nutrition and nothing complicated for its delicate and developing nervous system. When the healthy hormones kick in, you may not feel like eating much at first, as I did. Opening the fridge can be the last thing you want to do, especially when your sense of smell heightens and you are turned off strong-smelling foods. When you are not pregnant and you are nauseous; you choose not to eat. But having a baby means you cannot afford to do that, so I soon learned that forcing myself to eat very small amounts regularly would mean that my body wasn't producing too much bile from having an empty stomach. Sometimes it can be the overproduction of bile in your gut that makes you feel nauseous, so find something you can handle and make sure it's there first thing in the morning. This is because your stomach has usually been empty for at least 6-8 hours and you want to make sure you keep it full so that the bile production doesn't occur without there being food to digest.

Another possible reason for 'morning wellness' may be that consuming artificial foods like packaged items containing artificial sweeteners may cause your body to become more sensitive in order to protect your growing foetus. In some cases, being sick after consuming these processed foods may be your body's way of once again providing a filter to your developing baby. Consuming something so unnatural, experts suggest, may even potentially harm your developing foetus. (see <http://www.holisticmed.com/aspartame/preg.html>)

Artificial sweetener may be found in chewing gums, light yogurts and many other packaged foods like diet soft drinks that have 'no sugar' on the label. Some consume them because they believe an artificial sweetener is actually healthier and better for them than sugar. It is not — all artificial sweeteners are exactly that: artificial!

You may have thought it would help you to control a healthy weight. But do artificial sweeteners help us fight the battle of the bulge? A recent study by US General Practitioner Dr Joseph Mercola suggests not! There are no studies proving that diet drinks assist weight loss.

In fact, the very opposite is true. The sweetness of the soda tends to stimulate appetite, especially for more sweets, and even showed it was linked to cancer.

Include more fresh and organic foods and eat fewer packaged foods.

Eat fresh, healthy, unadulterated, whole grain foods which are readily available in markets. The key is to eat foods which are as close to nature as possible and read the ingredients on labels. If there are numbers or scientific words you don't recognise, it usually means it is disguising something that has been made in a lab.

The only way to be sure that you are only having morning sickness because of hormones and not because of artificial foods is to remove them completely from your diet. That way if you still feel sick, you can refer to your morning sickness as 'morning wellness', knowing that you just have really healthy hormonal changes that are providing the right environment for your baby.

CUT OUT CAFFEINE

Caffeine is a diuretic, which takes water out of your body, making you dehydrated and tired. Research from The Australasian Research Institute (2006) suggests consuming it may impact your baby's neurological development and has been implicated in possible miscarriages. Caffeine is found in your 'latte hit', cups of tea and even some soft drinks. Consumption overstimulates your adrenal glands, which may also cause you to feel more moody during pregnancy and prevent you from getting a more restful sleep.

New research has shown in the US that caffeine taken during pregnancy is thought to increase the probability of a child developing diabetes.

Your best bet is to opt for a dandelion latte or peppermint tea, drink much more water and watch your energy levels increase!

MAGNIFICENT MAGNESIUM

Magnesium is vital for normal muscle function. Together with calcium it acts to cause muscle contraction and relaxation. A balance of both is imperative for a healthy mum and baby. Most people meet their calcium requirements but often fail to consume optimal amounts of magnesium. Some mothers-to-be complain of muscle cramping in their legs during pregnancy, especially at night. To avoid muscle cramps; take extra magnesium. It will certainly help with this symptom and feed all your muscles with the nutrition it requires to function at its best.

It also helps with calcium absorption. Good quality powder form is best and can be obtained from your naturopath or chiropractor. Some foods high in this wonderful mineral are nuts such as almonds, and green leafy vegetables such as kale, spinach and silver beet.

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Remember, your uterus is a muscle too, so it will benefit from the magnesium. Keep it functioning well as it houses your baby and will need to contract optimally when it is finally ready to push your beautiful bundle out into the world!

LOOK AFTER YOUR 'LIFELINE'

Your spine is the lifeline that houses your delicate nervous system, which controls and co-ordinates every cell, tissue and organ in your body. Keeping your spine aligned and moving well is imperative for a healthy pregnancy. It oxygenates your body and provides healthy signals from your brain to every part of you. Research posted by the International Chiropractic Pediatric Association – Research Foundation showed that 84% of women receiving chiropractic care during pregnancy reported relief of back pain during pregnancy.

There was significantly less likelihood of back pain during labour, and the women studied had shorter and easier labours and less need for pain medication during birth. Fallon J DC. Proceedings of the World Chiropractic Congress: 1991 (pg. 24-31)

Melbourne chiropractor Dr Warren Sipser says: "As your body changes shape with the increased load of being pregnant, your joints have to work harder. You also release hormones such as relaxin, which softens joints even more. This may become a problem if your spine or pelvis is already misaligned as it can compromise the normal movement. Things like back pain and pelvic instability are not normal occurrences during pregnancy. Having chiropractic check adjustments may make your pregnancy and birth so much easier and healthier for you and your baby".

"HEALTH HAPPENS BY CHOICE, NOT BY CHANCE!"



BENEFITS OF EXERCISING DURING PREGNANCY:

1. *Helps decrease fatigue, even in the first trimester. This is also true of insomnia*
2. *Can help women have a shorter labour*
3. *Has been shown to help lose pregnancy weight faster*
4. *Helps with length of time during and labour because of greater stability. We know labour is a marathon - so train for it!*
5. *Reduces aches and discomfort associated with pregnancy*
6. *Can help reduce likelihood of tearing from episiotomy*
7. *Can reduce the number of caesareans that are necessary*
8. *May prevent stretch marks*
9. *Leads to a faster postpartum recovery*
10. *May prevent gestational diabetes*

Schedule an appointment with your local wellness chiropractor who is trained to detect and correct vertebral subluxations of the spine and pelvis.

USE CRAVINGS AS CLUES

Sometimes pregnancy cravings are actually clues for what your body is in fact needing. If you are craving sweet foods, this usually means you are lacking magnesium, while those who crave ice cream, icy poles or ice cubes need more iron in their diet. One or two times of allowing yourself to have a special treat is fine but if it becomes a regular occurrence you may like to reassess your food intake and make sure you and your baby are getting the best nutrition possible.

SCHEDULE SLEEP

Sleep is underrated, especially during pregnancy. Cells replenish when you sleep. Your baby gets to move more and become more active when you sleep, and this actually helps its brain to develop and grow. You resting means your baby gets smarter. Sleep has been shown to decrease food cravings, increase your feelgood chemical levels and endorphins and make you less moody which can be very good for your partner. Remember that you have a person breathing, feeding, growing and even hanging off you so all of this expends extra energy and requires more rest than usual. Listen to your body and schedule in a daily nap.

DON'T STOP EXERCISING!

Your degree of exercise during pregnancy will depend largely on the degree of fitness for the months and years before pregnancy. It is a time to use your base or level of pre-pregnancy fitness as a foundation and so the fitter you are entering this body-changing time, the better. Luckily for you, you're already doing everything you can!

The clinical studies show that exercise is of significant benefit to the mother and child by circulating blood around the body, more oxygenation is achieved and waste products are removed more quickly.

This is more important because the baby also uses the mum's detox and excretory system so the quicker it gets out the better for mum.

Pregnancy is a marathon rather than a sprint which is why it necessitates a 9-month gestation, so treat your exercise during this time in the same way. For the first trimester at least (12 weeks) your exercise routine will not have to alter much at all (unless you suffer with significant nausea - morning wellness) and only as the spine changes to accommodate the growing baby will you have to modify how you train, focusing on your posture to ensure that you are exercising the right muscles.

There are 3 curves in your spine, when looking at it from the side, which accentuate more and more as the pregnancy progresses. This places extra weight bearing on the joints of your spine, attaching ligaments and muscles.

Exercising should definitely include core stabilisation sets to provide support for the ever-changing physiology. Using a Fitball is excellent for this. When doing lunges and squats place the Fitball in the small of your back and lean with it against a wall for support.

Women have become fearful about hard exercise during pregnancy. This should not be the case as there are women who partake in triathlons early into the 3rd trimester. Again, the degree of fitness leading up to the pregnancy will provide the basis for it during. If you're really concerned; you may like to wear a heart rate monitor, but I found that if I just listened to my body it would tell me to stop when I was training too hard. Your body may become breathless or you may feel faint. These are signs that the muscles are taking more blood and giving less to the baby. You may get these signs to tell you to stop or

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at least slow down. Listen to them.

Things like squats, deadlifts, overhead presses etc should be modified because of the increase in the lumbar lordosis. Modification may mean a lighter weight, a seated rather than standing posture and, most importantly, a detailed and vigilant focus on posture.

To ensure you have correct posture when training, make sure when looking straight forward that you focus on drawing your navel toward your spine, slightly contract your glutes and imagine there is a ball in between your shoulder blades and you have to keep it there and prevent it from falling. **ufm**

Chiropractors Association of Australia

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