



# Top 5 Supplements for Pregnancy



Julia is a Naturopathic Doctor with over a decade of experience in clinical practice, helping people restore their health. Since her own childhood years and the challenges they presented, she has had a passion for helping families set a strong course for their health as early as possible.

Since becoming a mother, she realized what a formative time the postpartum window is for both mothers and babies and began researching and training in postpartum health. Developmental health and supporting mothers and families remains her passion. Julia is the founder of Beyond Expecting, a program to support new mothers through the transition from pregnancy to postpartum.

*Dr. Julia Segal MD*



# Top Five Supplements For Pregnancy

Folate (or folic acid) is the one supplement that is widely recommended before and during pregnancy as it is common knowledge that it is vital for the fetus' developing brain and nervous system.

There are, however, five essential nutrients that are rarely present in sufficient amounts in prenatal multivitamins yet are just as crucial, each in its own way. The requirements for these vary from woman to woman depending on diet, risk factors, and the stage of the journey they're at within preconception, pregnancy, or postpartum. The benefits of correct supplementation are huge, as they may extend to the lifelong health of the baby as well as the mother's long-term mental and physical well-being.

So here, in no particular order, are the other star players:

## Vitamin D

01

The important thing here is not the exact dose you take, but to get your blood level of Vitamin D tested. This is an important blood test in the three months pre-conception, as well as during each trimester of your pregnancy. Having a sufficient blood level of vitamin D before 20 weeks of pregnancy significantly lowers the risk of pregnancy complications such as preeclampsia, gestational diabetes, pre-term birth and placenta complications. It can also influence your pregnancy experience by improving sleep and physical discomfort. Work with your naturopathic doctor to schedule your blood tests and adjust your vitamin D dosage accordingly.

## Iron

02

Iron-deficiency anemia happens when the level of hemoglobin drops below a certain level, which commonly happens in the second trimester when the mother's blood volume literally doubles. Anemia before 30 weeks of pregnancy is associated with higher rates of ADHD and other cognitive conditions later in the child's life. For the mother, anemia during pregnancy, and even simply low iron storage (ferritin), is associated with later postpartum depression. It takes a few months to develop anemia once iron levels start dropping, and at least a few weeks to reverse, so it is important to monitor and supplement iron proactively. So, get your blood test pre-conception and during each trimester of pregnancy, especially earlier on, and work with your naturopathic doctor to supplement iron as needed.

03

## Choline

While we can in principle source all the choline we need through foods such as eggs, meats, fish, liver, dairy products, mushrooms, and nuts, in practice only a quarter of mothers consume enough of this essential pregnancy nutrient. The official recommendation for pregnancy is 450mg/day, but there is evidence that double this amount further improves fetal neurological development. Eggs are our choline superhero, containing more choline than most other foods. It's no surprise, then, that eggs have always been considered a fertility and pregnancy superfood! Any choline that is lacking in the diet can be made up through supplementation. Work with your naturopathic doctor to determine the right form and dose for your individual needs.

04

## Omega-3

Omega-3: Supplementation with Omega-3 fatty acids from fish oil, preferably sourced from small fish such as sardines, anchovies and mackerel, reduces perinatal complications such as pre-term birth, low birth weight, stillbirth, and hospitalization in a neonatal unit. It may even increase the rate of pregnancies that are carried past the due date, and increase the baby's birthweight. The Omega-3 fatty acids from fish oil help support neurological development of the fetus, and the right fish oil may even help to prevent postpartum depression. With authorities recommending limited consumption of most fish due to contamination, supplementation with high-quality, purified omega-3 fish oil (or its vegan equivalent, algae oil) is most helpful to fulfill your pregnancy requirements.

05

## Calcium

Calcium: This is another vitamin that can be obtained in your regular diet. Getting at least 750mg of dietary calcium per day decreases the need for calcium supplementation. In those with a lower calcium diet or those having trouble eating well during pregnancy due to nausea or food aversions, supplementation starting from 20 weeks of pregnancy has proven to be helpful in preventing pre-eclampsia and consequent pre-term birth. There may be other benefits to the mother during pregnancy and breastfeeding, as adequate intake prevents calcium from our bones from being recruited to fill in the gap in fetal growth and breastmilk production.

# Conclusion and Next Steps

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I did not know before, and in places  
that I had no idea needed healing.



*Thank you!*