



Healthy
Pregnancy
SUMMIT



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Why You Should Meet With Your Doctor Before You Become Pregnant

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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Welcome to our session on why you should have a preconception visit with your doctor. I'm Professor James Adams. And with me is Dr. Debby Hamilton, an expert on the subject. Welcome, Debby.

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Thank you very much and glad to be here this morning.

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Great. That'd be can you tell us a little bit about your experience and background on preconception visits and consultations with your doctor?

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Sure. I'm an integrated pediatrician. And so I take care of kids in a holistic manner, but also a lot of kids with chronic illnesses like ADHD and autism. And I started to realize that the healthier the mom was, the healthier the kids were. And so I started and I have a background in nutrition. So I started doing preconception workshops with moms, considering especially when I had a



mom who had one child with issues and she wanted another baby, like, what can I do to have a healthy child and so I started to do a few workshops. And it really the more I delve into it, I realized, the more you have a healthy mom more, you have a healthy baby. And I realized the importance of this preconception visit. So that's how I started. And I've been in. I've been a pediatrician for over 25 years, and I've been doing some of this preconception work and integrated pediatrics for about 15 years. So it's really gratifying to see, you know, healthy children, you know, and I think that that's something really important now, because we have more and more kids with, you know, different issues, learning issues, asthma, allergies, and I think it's really important to figure out why these kids have these and do something to address this.

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I think that's a great philosophy. Can you tell us especially why it's important to have a prenatal preconception visit with your doctor?

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I think the more we learn about some of the risk factors, and some of the things that are impact our children, is I go back earlier earlier, and if you have a healthy Mom, you're gonna have a healthy baby. And I think that, you know, we're used to In prenatal visits, most prenatal visits started about eight weeks, when already a lot of the organs are formed when there's already had a lot of development. But if we get moms before they get pregnant, and we look at diet, and we look at their health and their nutrition, then going into pregnancy, they go into pregnancy even more healthy. And the healthier the pregnancy is, the healthier the baby is. So that's kind of how I think about it.

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Yeah, I think that's very important. What are some of the major health concerns that families should discuss with their doctor?

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I think

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if you go into a preconception visit, you really need to look at all the mom's health issue on any medicines. Does she take any supplements, even some herbs cannot be healthy in pregnancy? We have to remember all these things. Does she have any chronic medical issues? Does she have any issues with the thyroid, any autoimmune disease, any digestive issues, you know, it's very common for chronic disease and women tend to have babies later and later, so you're more likely to have issues What about high blood pressure? I think there's a lot of things to think



about that way. How does she eat? Is she a healthy diet? Or does she eat mainly a processed foods diet? I think most people know about the smoking and the drinking marijuana, or as my kids called weed is really common. So there's things about we have to think about the entire health of the mom.

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Sure. And so are there any medications that are possible concerns that should be discussed with your doctor and possibly discontinued if you're going to think about becoming pregnant?

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I think one of the things that's most common or very common, more and more common, our antidepressants, anti anxiety medicines, and there's been a lot of studies. And, you know, I've had other discussions with practitioners about this, because if you need a healthy mom to have a healthy baby, and what is the risk benefit in terms of the mom's depression, but there are some antidepressants that are probably safer and have been studied more. So maybe you have to discuss with your doctor. That kind of the risk benefits of antidepressants and also which might be safe. Things like anti seizure medicines, which are also used for depression can be actually a big concern and some of them are contraindicated in pregnancy. If there's high blood pressure, you need to know which medicines, thyroid medicine, sometimes if women are low thyroid, they might need to adjust their medicine going into pregnancy, their different needs and pregnancy. So I think really any medicine and any supplement are they taking any one supplement and really, really high doses? For instance, vitamin A really high doses and pregnancy it can be dangerous. So it's important to know really the entire medical history what this woman is taking.

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Very good point. And are there also medical tests that women should consider and discuss with her doctor?

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Well, I think of there's certain nutrients so certain tests specially iron, most women know that iron in pregnancy is really, really important. The iron needs during pregnancy go up and up and up. So if you look at iron test and I think of things like ferritin, and iron and a CVC, because you want a woman to go into pregnancy with adequate or good iron stores, if she goes in with low iron stores, you know, that could affect the baby and that actually causes a long term issues with kids. vitamin D levels are really important. I was always in the I did a lot of research on zinc and zinc and iron. So I think that is very important. thyroid if you have low thyroid, that can affect the impact intellect of the baby. homocysteine, different B levels, vitamin B levels, people



know that full aids are really important and folic acid, but we really have to think about this goes into supplements or what type of folic acid we do. So I think of a general screen, liver and kidney screen. In terms of just kind of basic overall health are good, really good kind of baseline test for any woman considering pregnancy?

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Great. I think that's so important to do a thorough workup. What about diet? What are some diet changes that we might want to think about to encourage a healthier diet prior to becoming pregnant?

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I think every woman should have a nutritional evaluation of some sort. I think the number one thing that I think of is organic foods. There's been more and more research about things like glyphosate, which on a lot of our specially processed foods, and the impact of children, so a mom who is exposed to more pesticides in pregnancy, can have children with more neurologic issues. So if you think of anything terms of diet, think organic, and sometimes it's a cost for people. The Environmental Working Group has a wonderful list of the foods with the most pesticide exposure and the food with the least.

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So if you do all organically

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But if you can't then at least poor prioritize which is the highest and avoid the highest pesticides, foods, so Whole Foods less processed. If you do less processed foods, you're gonna have less exposure to pesticides. Even in with organic foods, but I think organic foods is think about a balanced diet, making sure you get enough protein, making sure you know fruits and vegetables, but even good fats. You know, fats are not bad, especially in pregnant women and babies are actually really important. What about avoiding, I always think if you look at ingredient on food, and you don't know what it is, and this is not a food, you probably should avoid it. So artificial sweeteners, dyes, preservatives, as I said, if you don't look at you don't know what it is. It's probably a chemical and to avoid it. So really some basic things and eating you know enough and not too much and basically Making sure you know you want to go on a pregnancy with a good weight, you know, not too high and not too low. So basing your diet on that, too is really important.

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Great. And what about toxic exposures? What should women be thinking about and trying to come to trying to limit their exposure to toxins in the environment at home at work?



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I think we, if you don't look at it,

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we are exposed to so many different things on a daily basis that we don't even think about. For women just think about all the different you know fragrances or different things that are in everything you use. What are you using on your face, your moisturizer, suntan lotion? How are you washing your skin? I think in terms of cosmetics, even the makeup, we have to think about what's in that because that anything is on your skin, you can absorb. And so I think that that's one area of toxicity that women don't think about, that you really make a difference if you just look how you clean your house. There's a lot of toxic chemicals and there's some really natural alternatives at work. But what about cleaners? What are you spraying on your garden? You know, think about the pesticides that you're exposed to. What about cooking and plastic kind of avoiding plastics or plastic bottles? I think you know, it can be exposed to so many things a day. And if you think about some just general areas and start looking at this, you can make some big changes that will impact impact your health and obviously diet and organic foods is a huge one in terms of toxic exposure also, or work exposure. You know, are you working, you know, doing nails, what kind of exposure do you have? What kind of exposure does dad have? You know, thinking about the whole family?

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Sure. I think also because indoor air quality is generally worse than outdoor trying to frequently open your windows and doors to get fresh air into the house. And then also using a heppa filter to clean the air in the house. I think it's also good to help improve air quality.

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Water if we didn't mention water, you know, different cities have different water quality. So having a water filter can make a big difference because obviously, hydration and drinking adequate water and I think that's the best liquid most women, most people should drink. So I think that that's another way that you can just avoid any potential exposure and water. Pretty easy. You can buy a Brita filter, pretty easy to do. Sure,

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sure. Are there any What about nutritional supplements? Should women consider a prenatal supplement before conception?

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I think this is extremely important. extremely, extremely important, because we're talking about getting her nutrition as maximizing nutrition before pregnancy. Because pregnancy takes a lot of



it's a big burden, not a burden. But you know, it definitely is, you know, increasing your nutrients you need during pregnancy. So having a prenatal really guarantees that your your have adequate nutrition before. Now with prenatal supplements, not ever Every one is the same. The neurological Health Foundation actually has a list of all the hundreds of prenatal vitamins and really kind of ranked them because some prenatal vitamins don't have adequate calcium. so dumb don't have adequate iron. If you just have one daily prenatal, you'll probably don't have enough nutrition in that. So it is important. Omega threes. I think of things like dhk are really important for brain growth of the baby. So really important for pregnancy. They also decrease the risk of preterm labor, they decrease postpartum depression. I really think that that's a key thing for all people, because it's not in our diet anymore. I am a fan of probiotics. I think they're we're learning much more about the microbiome and the importance of it and overall health. As again, though, if you can get your nutrition in a really good state before pregnancy, that really helps your pregnancy outcomes and again, affecting that child in the future.

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Sure. So we've talked a lot about what the mother can do to help prepare for pregnancy. But also the father's role is important to what are some of the issues that you think are important to make sure the father's as healthy as possible to improve the chance of conceiving and to help have a healthier child?

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Right, so Dad's not off the hook here at all. So if you think about, again, it's two people. So his health is important. I think we're realizing that.

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So again, think about diet,

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he needs to eat organic diet, if they're living together, you know, you cook one food, everybody's eating a healthy diet. So the same kind of things. I like the idea of a prenatal for men, that are some company that makes prenatal vitamins for men. There's certain nutrients that are really key, think of CO q 10. Think of zinc. There is an increased risk of infertility and our country, and men contribute to that. Men tend to put their cell phones in their pockets, the EMF, we don't know the impact of that, but it does heat up the body and you don't want that. So different things like that toxicity. Where does the man work? Are they exposed to anything? You know, what their health hopefully if you get the house healthy and the diet improved with everybody and the yard, so really some of the same things as as a woman. So same things are important for the men and the woman before conception.



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Thanks. We've covered a lot of very important issues. Are there any other topics you want to cover is anything we missed?

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I think it's really important that I really think the medical establishment should have a required preconception visit. I mean, not ever all pregnancies are not all planned. But if we actually can get that into people think of women think that okay, I'm thinking during pregnancy, I need to go to the doctor. Because the best outcome for a healthy child is a healthy mom. And having a healthy mom going into pregnancy, really, you have a healthier pregnancy, more of a full term pregnancy, less complications. And any pregnancy complication increases the risk of health issues or the child. So ultimately, healthy mom, Healthy Pregnancy, Healthy baby. And I think if you think that way,

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that's really important.

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Well, thanks very much, Debby, for all your information. It's been very helpful.

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Well, thank you for joining me today. I guess I said this is I think, is one of the most important concepts that women considering pregnancy do. The best thing they can do is really kind of get their body ready get the health optimized to have a healthy child. So thank you very much.

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Thank you.

