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What Foods To Eat And Dangerous Foods To Avoid

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So welcome to our session on healthy nutrition as part of our Healthy Pregnancy series. I'm Professor James Adams and with me today is Julie Matthews. We're very pleased to have Julie here. She's a certified nutrition consultant. She's worked with me previously on some research studies, we've published a research paper together. And she's very knowledgeable, knowledgeable about many areas of nutrition, including healthy pregnancy. In fact, you can learn more information about her website, on our nutritionforpregnancy.com So thank you very much for joining us here today. Julie.

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Thank you. I'm so happy to be here.

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Great, great. So Julie, can you tell us a little bit more about your background and experience especially working with women during pregnancy?

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Absolutely. So as you mentioned, I'm a certified nutrition consultant. I have been doing nutrition for 17 years. My always had a passion for healthy pregnancy, even well before I ever had a baby of my own. My specialty really is Autism Spectrum Disorder. And so anything that we can do to have healthier kids and just set them on the right track is just really always been a passion



of mine. And so I'm really excited to be here. I try to bring in as much of the research and also practical information for people so that they not only know why to do it, but what to do and how to do it.

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That's great. That's great. I know families are very much enjoyed working with you and found you to be very helpful. So let's begin with Why is good nutrition so important during pregnancy. Why is it so important for brain development for overall health?

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Absolutely, well, babies are developing rapidly when they are in their mom's belly and so it is a time where we need to set the framework or we want to set this framework of really good nutrition, it can make a huge difference later in life and all sorts of areas, whether that's obesity or neurological function, all sorts of areas because the body doesn't, never develops I would say as rapidly as it does during this time. So every nutrient that comes in every bit of fuel that we get is really essential to helping that fetus really grow and develop in the way that it needs to and it's going to set it up for a lifelong of health. So it helps with lots of brain development, especially in the third trimester, but lots of brain development, obviously, the nervous system. In fact, some of the nervous systems formed in only the first few weeks of pregnancy. So getting things started off on the right track, even before you get pregnant is really helpful or as soon as you can and and from there, you know, just setting up a good system for laying down strong bones and everything that we need. And so pregnancy is a time where nutrition is really crucial.

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Absolutely. I think if at any one time in your life you want to eat healthy, it's especially just before and during your pregnancy. Yes. Yeah. So what are some general guidelines do you recommend to women to help them prepare for pregnancy and to help have to eat healthy during pregnancy?

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Well, you know, I like to suggest that people do a lot of just really, you know, doesn't have to even necessarily be fancy, just really solid, common sense principles, eating healthy food, avoiding the junk foods and the sugars and all of that type of stuff. Eating as organically as you can, getting good nutrients, good fats, good vitamins and minerals. And a lot of this can really be a comment. If we eat a whole foods diet, so if we're eating, I like to think how close can we get to the farmer, right, we get meat and protein, we get vegetables, some fruits, maybe some nuts, seeds, beans, those kinds of things. The more Whole Foods, the better. And of course, the more nutrient dense. And so that's going to be a wide variety of food. But also organic is



really important as well. So those would be I would say, some of just the really solid principles that I think helped to lay the foundation of what a good diet would look like during pregnancy.

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I think that's great. But again, we really want to get across this idea of a good balance of foods, vegetables, fruits, protein, fat, etc. So let's talk about each of those. In particular, what are your recommendations about eating fruits and vegetables? What are some good ones to eat? good ways to prepare them What are a healthy amount to be eating?

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Yes, so a lot of times people will lump fruits and veggies together and I know when I was a kid the food Well, I guess was the four there were four groups at the time. And fruits and vegetables were all in one category, I like to really divide them out so that in my clients mind, they realize that we really want to get lots and lots of good vegetables and some fruit. So my focus is really to try to get as much of those good vegetables in a wide variety of colors because those different colors have different phytonutrients. So whether it's beets, which are, you know, Pinky purple, whether it's green, leafy greens, other types of greens, orange foods, all of those types of things are going to give us different phytonutrients. And so a really simple way is to try to eat a rainbow of foods. And so that keeps it you know, again, kind of easy without it without getting too technical about it. The more variety of vegetables that we can get the better so some some good or Maybe it's a Orange pepper, bell pepper or butternut squash or maybe we'll talk about lots of greens have lots of good full late greens and things like um, and calcium rich greens. So, leafy greens and all different kinds of greens. So a lot of times people will hear about leafy greens, but don't really know what that means. I'm not thinking as much lettuce although lettuce is a green leafy vegetable, but I'm thinking of really the dark green ones like kale or collard greens or things like that. Also the cruciferous vegetables, broccoli, and brussel sprouts, they have lots of sulfur which are really great for the system. So you know getting of a wide variety of different vegetables. I like to recommend about seven vegetables a day, about half of the plate or so being vegetables and So we think about seven vegetables in a day. It's kind of a lot if we wait all the way till the end of the day to try to get seven vegetables in. So I encourage my clients and my families that I work with to start at breakfast. And I like to think of just try to get one vegetable in a breakfast and maybe it would be a sweeter one, maybe it would be some period carrot or some butternut squash soup or something, something that maybe is a little more palatable in the morning, possibly, maybe it's snap peas, which are a little bit sweet or something like that. And then a couple at lunch and then some at dinner and maybe some at a snack and that way, you're not trying to cram them all and you're much more likely to be successful in getting them in. So that's what I really like to do in terms of vegetables. Folate is so important during pregnancy. It's really important for a good nervous system development and all of that and so I like to look at things like asparagus and collard greens. And then I



mentioned broccoli and beets are really good ones, avocados also good. And then even beans, legumes, those are really rich and full eight as well. So those are some of my vegetable principles. And then fruit is good too. It's not the fruit is bad. But I think what sometimes happens is that if people don't realize how important vegetables are, they tend to go to lots of fruits sometimes and so may might even include dried fruits and fruit juices which can get pretty high in sugar. And so then, you know, that can be a bit of a challenge for some people. So I like to keep the fruit at Whole Foods and in some moderation, you know, maybe a couple pieces a day or something like that, and then get the raw the rest of your produce in the form of really good quality vegetables.

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Great and coming back to vegetables. People often think about starchy vegetables like potatoes and I think what you'd like to make is a little bit of that as well. Preferably not french fries, but we want to emphasize more the other less starchy vegetables, you have

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a very good point that you'll notice when I listed all the vegetables, I didn't list potatoes and corn and things like that I really consider those more starches and grain type of foods. So yes, we're looking at non starchy vegetables is primarily what I'm looking at now, maybe a little bit of sweet potato because it's got some good fiber and some other good nutrients but as you said, avoiding the french fries as our main vegetable or corn and potatoes as our main vegetables and going more towards all of those other really wonderful and keeping those other ones, maybe to a little side dish on occasion.

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And so I think it's great the way you gave people a sense that we want half of the plate to be vegetables. Can you talk about the other half of the plate? What are some other food important food so maybe you start with protein?

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Absolutely. Well, protein absolutely would be the next thing. would put on the plate for sure. And in terms of what that might look like, I like a wide variety of protein. Some fishes good during pregnancy as long as it's lower mercury fish. I love red meat as well just generally speaking, it's got some really good fat, surprisingly. And it also has some really good amino acids, including carnitine, which actually Some studies have shown is really important during pregnancy. And so getting some good quality protein, whether it's poultry, or red meat or fish, I think just a variety of those is going to be good. And then I like to include some fats on the plate. It might be more mixed in rather than like a whole separate side, but I do include fat as something good. So maybe there's avocado on there. Maybe there's olive oil drizzled on, that's important. And then



and we'll hopefully go into fats more because those are really important for a baby In brain development, and then sometimes people will do starches. And it really depends on the person, what they can tolerate, if at all, how much so I like to think of, I like to think of my plate as lots of vegetables with some protein, and then maybe something else on the side, depending on what you can handle and, um, how it works for that individual.

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Yeah, and for some people, that may be a big change. On the other hand, again, it's not forever, but just especially during this most crucial time during their pregnancy.

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Yes, you know, sometimes, yes, absolutely. Sometimes blood sugar can get a little bit more touchy during pregnancy. And so it's really good to just keep up the good healthy habits and if it's something different than you've been doing before, maybe just paying a little bit more attention to the good vegetables and a little bit less on the flour products, the breads, the starches and those types of things.

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Right, going easy on those things and the desserts that people often have. And then you've mentioned again about fat. Let's talk a little bit more about the importance of omega three and omega six fats and just healthy fats in general.

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Absolutely. So omega threes and omega sixes are considered essential fats, essential fatty acids, which means they're essential because we have to consume them, we can't make them. And so and and these two essential fats are really important for brain growth and brain development. And so we need to get these in. They're also important for the cell membrane and all sorts of other things. So omega threes we often most hear of in conjunction with fish. So good fatty fish, things like salmon are going to be really good for that. And then looking at omega sixes, now, sometimes we get too much omega six in the form of lots of fried foods and things like that. So I'm not thinking of those, but I'm thinking more whole food based so some good Omega sixes might be some high quality nuts and seeds or a little bit of avocado. You know, many of these foods have a variety of three sixes, maybe some nines. Maybe in the case of coconut oil or some animal fats, we might have some saturated fat as well. And actually, I don't consider any of those bad fats, as long as we're consuming high quality forms. And in moderation, we don't want to go crazy on any of them. But we usually need to put a little extra focus particularly on the omega threes, since they're so important, and because a lot of us don't really get them on a daily basis. And when we do get fish, sometimes it's in the form of tuna and other things that can be really high and mercury. So just making a concerted effort to get some



of those good fats in maybe some people will do fish oils or things like that, depending on what their diet looks like.

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I think that's true. Important to talk about fish. So let's talk about certain types of fish that would want to avoid, like, for example, shark and swordfish, as opposed to good fish. So what would you recommend?

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Yes. So you're absolutely right there. So the bigger the fish, usually the more mercury it's going to have accumulated in its time, because it's going to eat all the little fish and it's going to accumulate more and more. So generally speaking, that's a good rule of thumb, sword fish. Those those big fish would be things to more avoid tuna is often one that can be high. Now there are some little differences there, but I won't go into too much. There are some some small boutique places that do line caught different kinds of fish and they might tout one thing or another, but I like to keep those aside because those are the ones where people can get into a bit of trouble with too much mercury. I like to focus on things like salmon and salmon is probably my favorite because it's The one of the highest in good fats, the omega threes, and it's one of the lower ones in mercury and the other small ones. I mean, I personally love sardines and always have since I was a little kid. That's an acquired taste, I suppose. I wish I guess is a good. This is not what this talk is about. But getting good healthy eating habits started early with kids is really good because it is amazing how it does last a lifetime. My sardine loving is still from the time I was a little kid eating them with my grandpa. So those are great. Anchovies, things like that. Some people like I said don't like them that can be strong in flavor. There are things like shrimp, they're not my favorite only because they can be produced in parts of the world where they don't have very good practices, and so they can have more toxins and things than maybe I would like so I don't know. I tend to be a big fan of salmon. So I do a lot of salmon and recommend a lot of that.

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Great, great. Okay. And then certainly important thing is let's talk about beverages and what are good things to drink? Certainly what let's start off with water. And yes, the recommendations there.

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Yes, I was gonna when you said what to drink, I was gonna say water.

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Water is obviously very important. It's very important during pregnancy. Want it? We need it for



the amniotic fluid. If we get too dehydrated, that's not good for the baby. We need it for expanding blood volume and all sorts of things. So getting water is important always but it's even more important during pregnancy and good quality, pure water, the best quality water that we can find would be ideal. Now, that's going to vary from person to person. So you know, do your best there. But water is really important. And then from there, I might say you know, maybe some herbal teas because that's pretty much just water with a little bit of some Like herbal, maybe it's a little chamomile at night or whatever that might be, I avoid I really recommend avoiding caffeine. So I don't recommend black teas. I don't recommend coffee. Now there are some people that will give you you know, a recommendation of some moderation just don't go over a certain amount. I just like to focus on less caffeine is better and zero caffeine is even better. That's my sense. So if you can go with no caffeine, I think that's really the best thing for the baby and for mama as well. So I tend to like to and of course we're not going to be doing alcohol and so none of that so really, I just tend to stick with water or if it's cold outside some hot lemon water or some tea or something like that some herbal tea.

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Yeah, so even some fruited water might fit in with that.

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Somebody Yes, sure. Somebody might do something with some essence of some fruit or, you know, if someone's really, let's say they went for a diet that was really high in soda, maybe they'll do water or even some sparkling water with just a splash of some fruit juice. You know, we want to take them from where they are now to something healthier. So for some people that might look a little that journey and the baby steps might be a little bit different.

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Sure, sure. Whatever people can do to try to improve their diet and reach these goals. The more they can, the better off they'll be. Yes. And so what about organic food? Why, why do we think organics are so important?

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organic food is crucial because it is raised without pesticides, and we know that pesticides, their whole purpose is to kill, they kill bugs. Now, the bugs are tiny so they kill bugs rapidly but for humans, they do add up in the body they can cause damage and a fetus is much, much smaller than a an adult, and can be more damage, especially again, when we talked about the development of the body, the brain, the nervous system, all of that. Anything that can be toxic to an adult is typically much more toxic to a baby because they haven't built those solid organs. You know, those, you know, those when I say so I mean like functioning, well functioning healthy organs yet, and we want them to be able to develop in that way. And so by eating



organically, we avoid the pesticides, GMOs, all of that kind of stuff that isn't as natural as what nature had intended for us. And there is some research looking at pregnant moms that were exposed to pesticides. Sometimes it was in agricultural communities and things you know, so maybe more pesticides than the average person might get. And we do see increases in certain neurodevelopmental delays like Autism and ADHD. So I just for lots of reasons, I think minimizing any of our toxins is really important. So we can hopefully prevent the baby from getting exposure to those.

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I think that's very important. What's amazing too is that studies have shown that as soon as you go organic in just a few days, the amount of toxics in your urine go down dramatically.

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Absolutely. That's a great point. So some people wonder, Well, does it really matter that much? Because, you know, maybe there's pesticides and things everywhere, like on the lawn at the playground, or whatever it is. But you're absolutely right. Research shows that a vast majority of the pesticides that are coming out in the urine are coming from the food that we eat, because when they go again, we see those levels dramatically go down. So you're absolutely right on that.

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Yeah. Yeah. So let's talk a little bit about weight gain during pregnancy. What do you think is a reasonable amount to gain during the first trimester second trimester third, trimester How can women gauge that and especially for women of different starting body weights,

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right, so just generally speaking, we see about 25 to 35 pounds throughout the pregnancy. And what that usually looks like is at the beginning the first few months, it's not very much weight gain at all, it's maybe two to four pounds total. And that's not very much then after that three month mark, it's about a pound a week. And so it's you know, it's it's not actually that much so I think a lot of what we hear about, of, you know, you're eating for two And all of this is not actually accurate, we only need at the beginning, we don't really need many more calories. And then as we start to put on, you know, let's say a pound a week, we might go up 350 calories for the next trimester and maybe have 400 or 450 extra calories from Pre pregnancy time of eating. So it's really not that much, it's maybe an extra snack or an extra small meal or something like that. So kind of keeping that in mind for people. Obviously, if they're hungry, they might want to eat more. Obviously, if you're hungry, that indicates you probably need more food, but but, you know, if you're eating and you're eating reasonably and healthy, it's, it's, it's, it's a moderate, it's a really much more moderate shift than we often think about.



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Okay, that's, I think, very important for people to realize. And so if someone starts off very thin, would you expect them to eat a little bit more?

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Thank you for that. Absolutely. So usually, people that are maybe either underweight or on the lower side, they might gain a little bit more, and then people that are maybe overweight when they start might gain less so if it's normally I'm just gonna toss up just averages. So if it's normally let's say 25 to 35 pounds, maybe somebody that is on the lower side might go to, instead of 35 pounds, maybe go to 40 pounds, someone on the other side, that's already a little overweight might only gain 20 pounds or something. So that kind of arrange it, you know, is fairly typical. And then one of the things I forgot to mention when we talked about protein is getting enough grams of protein in and this is kind of a shift for people sometimes. Because in the the first trimester, it's about 75 grams of protein. And then when we get into the second and third trimester, it's more about about 90 grams of protein if we're having if we're not having twins. And so it's, again, it's not an outrageous amount, but it's, you know, three solid good meals with protein in each meal, and a snack possibly that has some protein too. So really focusing on getting some protein at each meal, I think is going to be important. If you think about maybe four ounces of beef or chicken being about 25/30 grams of protein, you can see if you needed to get to 75 grams, you'd have solid each meal. And if you then get to 90 grams, you might need even some in some snacks. So and it doesn't all have to be animal protein. But you do get all the essential amino acids in animal protein. And so it's better to it's easier to meet all of your protein needs that way. It also has a nice, I don't solid say satiating feeling to it. So again, depends what someone's diet currently looks like. It depends somewhat if someone's a vegetarian or not. I tend to think some animal protein protein in the diet is generally good. I tend to like lots and lots of vegetables and some animal protein, but people will be different and And some people might make different choices, but it is good to realize that the protein goals that you're aiming for because especially if you aren't eating animal protein, are you eating only a little? You might want to keep that in mind.

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Sure, sure. Well, I think that's really important. And so, um, in terms of trying to have a very healthy child and people often thinking, especially about how to help their child's brain development, but really their whole body and in particular recommendations to try to help them have a healthier brain development.

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Oh, really great question. Ah, well, fats to me fats is one of the biggest ones. The third trimester, the brain grows the most out of I think it pretty much any time in the child's life and so that third



trimester is a really good time to get some good fats in there. And so if you're, if you're talking about, you know, how do we set a child up for good lifelong learning earning an IQ and you know, healthy cognitive function, all of that those good fats are going to be a really good one. Also just good quality, healthy eating is important as well. So even when you know we're not really we're talking about pregnancy right now, but what I found as after being pregnant is, once the baby comes, you're so busy with everything. It's almost like all the learning, it's hard to do new learning. So sometimes it's good to get a little bit of that first year or two in right now while you still sort of have the capacity for it and that first six months to two years for that baby when they're growing as a as a as a baby and a toddler. The healthier the diet for that baby, the better their IQ In fact, they say can make the difference in a couple IQ points. The healthier the babies that ate healthy foods, Whole Foods, vegetables and good quality food. did better IQ eyes than the ones that ate more? Well, let's say not more starchy things and french fries and those kinds of things when they were younger. So that makes a difference in IQ. Breastfeeding, if people are able to does make quite a difference is 3.8 IQ points actually for a baby that's been breastfed for six months. So getting a little bit out of pregnancy and a little bit into some of those first food things. But I think all of those things help to set the stage for good quality, healthy brain

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function later.

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Sure. So let's talk about some of the things that people should avoid when they're eating. So what are some of the major foods that are problematic and can affect their pregnancy affect their child's development?

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Yes, well, we talked about alcohol isn't everybody probably hopefully knows about that's one absolutely to avoid. But MSG is a really Interesting one as well, monosodium glutamate. There are some interesting studies showing that during pregnancy that can make some challenges in hunger regulation and obesity and things later possibly for babies so it's also not great for moms in general and developing baby so I like to avoid the MSG and those sorts of things. Now,

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this gives you food additives and with MSG is one example

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of absolutely so food out as the artificial colors, artificial flavors, preservatives. And then MSG is a little bit tricky because on a label, it'll say, it might say contains no artificial flavor. So then you



might know but it could say that and it could still have MSG because MSG is considered a flavor enhancer. And so the front of the package can say all the right things, but then if you look on the label, you'll you might see MSG or You might see hydrolyzed vegetable protein or autolyzed, yeast extract. These are all high glutamate MSG types of cousin related compounds. So those are some to be careful of, and, of course, undercooked meats and things. Hopefully most of us know to avoid things like that. We want to avoid, I like to avoid refined sugar. I like to try to avoid it all together or just really keep it to a minimum, that can make a really big difference. Like I said, for some people with gestational diabetes, or just just in general, less sugar is better for everyone. And this is of course true during pregnancy as well. Um, some women don't crave sugar during pregnancy when they do otherwise. And I think that's kind of fascinating. Maybe the body probably knows best and has some wisdom in there as well. But if someone is craving a lot of sugar, maybe just eating some more solid meals throughout the day. Keeping that blood sugar stable as possible, I think can be very helpful for that. I'm looking at other types of in addition to sugar, other things that can raise the glycemic values. So we kind of talked about some of those things like breads and pasta, and you know, chips and those kinds of things, just keeping those to a minimum can be important as well, because all of those things turn to sugar, just like sugar does. And so keeping those low can be really helpful for health as well. And allow, of course, if we fill up a most and we're not filling up on healthy stuff, too, so that kind of tape gets maybe a bit in the way of some of the good calories that we want to get in. I mentioned sodas and things avoiding those avoiding diet sodas and artificial sweeteners is really a big one. You know, people buy deli meats, or you know, soft cheeses and all those kinds of things. things as well. What else would I say? Um, most? Probably a lot of the big ones that I can think of. Yeah, just just really keeping it as healthy as possible, makes a really big difference.

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Great. Great. So I think that's very helpful. Now some families may, some woman may start on a special diet that could be on a vegetarian diet or a gluten free diet. Any particular recommendations for those groups?

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Yes, so there are some people you know, I work a lot with people on special diets. Gluten, like you said, gluten free, dairy free. I also have, you know, people do all sorts of diet, some people do paleo diets and things like that. So I would say a couple things there is that if you're doing a special diet, let's say if you're celiac or if you have a gluten issue, it is important to maintain that gluten free diet during Pregnancy that can make a really big difference. There was a study, if I can remember the all the details of the study, but it showed even just small amounts of gluten and things can be a problem for people that don't tolerate it when they're pregnant. And so that if they're if you're doing a special diet, and there's a really good reason for it a medical reason or



a health reason for it, usually you're gonna want to stick with that. And gluten is a good example of that. Now, there's other people that might be on, let's say, a grain free diet or, and it all depends why. So if they're on a grain free diet, because let's say they have ulcerative colitis or some inflammatory bowel disease, that is likely going to be important to stay on it because if they're not someone like that might get a lot of inflammation, then they won't be able to digest and absorb their food, and that could be detrimental. But there are also a lot of people these days doing a lot of fat diets and things that maybe they don't need, they just heard were good. And in those cases, I would just You know, I would be careful because the most well rounded and most variety you have in your diet typically is going to be better, it's less likely that you're going to create some sort of a deficiency if you're eating kind of a little bit of everything. But again, I am a big proponent of different types of special diets, whether it's a, you know, low oxalate diet or a low fodmaps, or a grain free or whatever it is, but I so I would say, I guess what I would say there with special diets is, if you have a good health reason that you were on a special diet before, it's likely that your doctor will probably recommend you stick with that diet. If you are not on a special diet. Now might not be the time to experiment and unless you're having health issues and you're feeling like you need to ramp up that diet some. And so yeah, I would say that that might kind of help people navigate a little bit Bit of

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what they might want to do in terms of one of these special diets.

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Sure, sure. So I think coming back then to try to wrap things up and summarize because I think this has been very informative. I think some of the highlights are having half their plate be full of a variety of vegetables, not starchy vegetables so much as the leafy greens and other variety of vegetables, a quarter of their plate being the proteins, and the other quarter can be some fruits, or some a few starchy vegetables or other hopefully healthy items, along with some good fats mixed in pretty good summary.

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Excellent summary. That was great. Absolutely.

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Great. Well, thank you so much for being with us today. Julie. I really appreciate all the work you do with families helping them have healthy pregnancies. Again, if you want to learn more, you can go to Julie site on nutritionforpregnancy.com And thank you very much for joining us today.



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Absolutely. Thank you for having me. And that website has things that are specifically for pregnancy. But there are a lot of my other work, you can also look for nourishing hope. I have a lot of information. It may be more geared to kids with special needs, but it's a good place to find me. And it's also just a great place to find just good solid nutrition principles, even if people don't have those types of things. So if you're looking for the latest good nutrition stuff, you probably find it on there even though it's a little bit off of our specific topic today.

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Great. Great. Thanks so much, Julie.

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Thank you.

