

Ask Leyla: How should I prepare for pregnancy?



Q: What basic supplements and foods should I choose when considering starting a family? It's not happening just yet, but I want to get my body ready. I understand it may be a good idea to have a checkup and ascertain any vitamin deficiencies or any other abnormalities prior to becoming pregnant, but I'm not sure that is in the plan just yet.

If my vitamin D levels are low, should I continue supplementation while pregnant?

A: I commend you for being proactive about your health before becoming pregnant. Doing so gives you every conceivable chance (pun intended!) for a healthy pregnancy and baby.

For starters, do get a checkup to see if any micronutrient deficiencies exist, along with the standard blood tests that your practitioner will order.

It is also a good idea at this time to get a urine toxic metals test to make sure you don't have elevated levels of mercury, lead or other toxic metals. If you do, a supervised detox would be appropriate *before* becoming pregnant. Don't consume seafood high in mercury such as tuna, swordfish, shark, king mackerel, or tilefish. Opt for wild Alaskan salmon and sardines instead.

Concentrate on eating an unadulterated, whole foods diet and take a daily multivitamin and mineral supplement for now. Address any deficiencies such as iron and vitamin D—to name a few—with your practitioner. It is appropriate to take at least 2,000 IU of vitamin D3 during pregnancy—and more if your levels are found to be very low.

And finally, if you're not already at a healthy weight, aim to get yourself there before becoming pregnant.

To your health!

Leyla Muedin, MS, RD, CDN