



A balanced diet is important to help optimise egg and sperm health, but individual needs vary, so guidance from a fertility dietitian is recommended



A dietitian will be able to give you specific advice about strategies to help reduce your baby's risk of developing a food allergy

The 'First thousand days' is the time from pre-conception until your baby turns two and is when the majority of genetic programming occurs. Genetic programming not only includes traits inherited from both parents, but also carries genetic information that reflects what your baby is exposed to and those of generations before them.

The pre-conception phase is widely debated; whether it's the day of conception or earlier. The eggs and sperm contain the genetic material for the future baby, and the health of these can be greatly impacted by diet. This can impact the health of the baby. For this reason, we describe the pre-conception phase as the three months prior to conception.

Egg and Sperm Health

Nutrition of the parents can greatly affect the health of their eggs and sperm. Research suggests that an unhealthy sperm or egg can have negative effects on the baby. It is important that both the mother and the father have a balanced diet to optimise egg and sperm health. Each individual is different, and dietary needs are individualised. A Fertility Dietitian will be able to advise an optimal diet for you.

Let's look at some examples of how nutrition during the First Thousand Days can impact your baby...

Food Preferences

Studies indicate that what the mother eats during pregnancy and breastfeeding impacts the taste preferences of the baby. A baby's taste buds are developed at around four months gestation, so what you eat during pregnancy and breastfeeding may influence food acceptance by your bubba in the future.

Allergies

Research suggests that if either the mother or the father has a food allergy, the baby has about a 30% risk of having a food allergy. If both parents have food allergies the risk will increase to about 60%, because the risk of food allergies is genetic. However, genetic programming also has a role in allergy risk. Nutrition in the first thousand days has a significant impact on genetic programming and can influence whether or not the baby will have a food allergy.

Optimising you Baby's Nutrition

Your Fertility Dietitian will be able to advise about the following:

1. Having a blood test to check your nutritional status before conceiving
2. Ensure you get any existing health conditions, such as Coeliac disease or diabetes, under control



Getting support from health professionals will help to ensure any existing conditions you have can be brought under control



An optimal weight varies for each individual and can help optimise your baby's health

3. Optimising your weight
4. Enhancing your gut microbiota with prebiotic foods
5. Breastfeed for as long as you can.

Nutrition during the first thousand days doesn't only benefit the baby, but also the mother. Eating well during this period is important to assist with managing emotions, dealing with morning sickness, fatigue and other symptoms you may be experiencing. A dietitian will be able to assist in optimising both the health of you and your baby.

Put what you've learnt into practice.....

1. Think about your current diet. Is it well balanced?
2. Do either you or your partner have any allergies? If so, chat to your dietitian about steps you can take to reduce the risk of allergies for your baby.
3. Which of the recommendations above have you not done yet? Could you make a plan regarding these steps?

To book an appointment with one of our dietitians please visit us at www.nutritionplus.com.au