



Healthy Families Homebirth

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Prenatal Supplements

Prenatal supplements: Generally, I encourage all women, especially pregnant women, and men to take a supplement. Even with the best diet, the nutrition found in food is highly dependent on the soil quality.

How often a supplement is taken can vary. I believe that supplements shouldn't be taken every day. Giving your body a rest for a day or two to process the nutrition and to use some stored vitamins is a good idea. Our bodies are highly adapted to store nutrients when they are available. Rather than constantly pounding our bodies with highly concentrated supplements, I recommend looking at the list below and work with your midwife to decide out which supplements you want to take and how often you should take them. One common way is to take the supplement Monday to Friday and taking Saturday and Sunday off from them. Some people prefer to take supplements every other day or some supplements one day and others the next day. It will vary to your preferences and needs.

Prenatal multivitamin/mineral supplement:

Why take it: You're pregnant! Usually these supplements will have a higher dose of iron, folic acid and other B-vitamins.

Food sources: Eat a wide variety of foods. Make every bite count and avoid empty calories that fill you up, but don't provide substance.

Brands:

- **Rainbow Light Prenatal One:** Meets or exceeds all the vitamins and minerals, except calcium and magnesium (see below); it has digestive enzymes and food powder to help make it gentle on the stomach; one a day; it's allergen free and vegan; not too pricy.
- **New Chapter Prefect Prenatal or MegaFood Baby and Me or Vitamin Code Raw Prenatal or Realfood Organics Prenatal Daily Nutrition or Kind Organics:** These supplement brands are special in their own right because they are all from food sources. That makes them easier on the stomach, even when empty. They digest very effectively, meaning that you absorb a much higher percent of each of the nutrients. They are the closest

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to a food like supplement that you can get. Also, many or all of the ingredients are going to be organically sourced. The downside to these supplements is that they are pricey and it is suggested to take 3-4 a day.

Iron:

Why take it: You need extra support to prevent anemia; you are feeling run down and tired all the time. Remember, your blood volume increases about 50-60% in pregnancy, keeping iron levels healthy will help provide the oxygen carrying cells you need. All of the brands that are recommended below are non-constipating.

Food Sources: Blackstrap molasses; leafy green vegetables (spinach must be cooked to get iron benefits); meat, especially liver (do not start eating liver during pregnancy. If you were eating it pre-pregnancy, then you can continue once a week.); whole grain or iron-enriched grains.

Vitamin C enhances absorption. Calcium blocks absorption.

Brands:

- **Floridix Iron+Herbs:** This supplement can boost iron levels quickly. Plus, it has several B vitamins to help if anemia is coming from another vitamin deficiency. It's a liquid and tastes pretty metallic, but drink some orange juice or lemonade after it to help with the flavor.
- **Megafoods Blood Builder:** This brand provides a food sourced iron supplement that builds iron levels over time or can help prevent anemia. It comes in a one-a-day tablet.

Calcium and Magnesium:

Why take it: Calcium and magnesium are large minerals, which make it hard to create a one-a-day supplement for them or to include them with a multivitamin. Magnesium deficiency is prevalent in cities across the globe. Magnesium helps with nerve function, muscle relaxation, energy production, pH balance, bones, and the body's use and absorption of other vitamins and minerals. Calcium is important for bone health, muscle function, metabolism process, pH balance, cardiovascular health, and nerve function. With calcium being an easier mineral to get from your diet I suggest a 1 to 1 ratio of calcium to magnesium.

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Food sources: Almond milk- higher in calcium than dairy products! Dairy products; Collard, turnips, and mustard greens; kale; broccoli, soybeans; and canned fish with bones.

Brands:

- **New Chapter's Bone Strength:** Bonus: small tablets! The calcium is taken from algae which makes it about 80% absorbable too. This product has some other vitamins and minerals in it to make it a complete mineral for your bones.
- **Rainbow Light or Country Life:** Both good brands of calcium. Rainbow Light has digestive enzymes available to help with absorption. Country Life also is available in soft gels, chewable, or liquid. Liquid forms include Bluebonnet and Solgar also.
- **Calm's Magnesium supplement:** This supplement only has magnesium, although they do offer one with calcium and magnesium. This supplement is a really nice way to end the evening. The powder must be mixed with hot water to dissolve properly. It's like a hot fruit drink before bed.
- **MegaFood Magnesium, Cal/Mag, or Bone:** Again a food sourced mineral, which makes it highly bio-available.

Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs), which includes Omega-3 and Omega-6:

Why take it: A generation of diets has labeled any fat as bad fats. Now we understand that there are different types of fats. Some are essential for our well-being, some are good for us, and some should be taken in moderation. Omega-3 and Omega-6 fats must come from our diet. Our bodies do not make these fats, but need them for many functions.

Food sources: Flax seed oil; Hemp seeds; Chia seeds; eggs from chickens that have been fed Omega-3; fatty fish like herring, salmon, cod, and sardines.

Brands:

- **Barleane's** flax seed oil: unfiltered and never heated this is the purest quality of flax oil. It is also made fresh when the store orders it.
- **Spectrum DHA:** one is made from algae oil and the other is made from fish oil.

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- **Manitoba Harvest Hemp oil:** high quality oil from hemp seeds
- **Fish oil:** Look for one that is molecularly distilled. This removes any heavy metals that could be stored in the fish.

Probiotics:

Why take it: Probiotics are the good bacteria that live in our gut, mouth, yoni, and on our skin. Having a good probiotic community helps keep us healthy, digest our food, and prevents overgrowth of yeast and bad bacteria. Pregnancy makes us a little more vulnerable to yeast overgrowth and slightly reduces our immune function. Replenishing our good flora regularly makes sure that we have more good bacteria available, when it is needed.

Food sources: Anything fermented: sauerkraut, kombucha, tempeh, kefir, and yogurt.

Brands:

- **Renew Life Ultimate Flora Woman's Probiotic:** Any probiotic from this line is going to be a high quality. If you are taking for more digestive support, then choose the adult formula. If you are taking for vaginal support, then choose one of the two woman's health products.
- **Jarrow Fem-Dophilus:** Probiotics especially formulated for women's health
- **Nature's Way Primadophilus Women's:** This line guarantees the quantity of probiotics are available all the way through the expiration date. That means that the actual amount of probiotic is actually higher than what the packaging says.

Individual vitamins or minerals (Remember most of these are already in the multivitamin.

Be sure to talk to your midwife about why you are adding an individual supplement to your diet):

Vitamin C: Take this when you are feeling under the weather or if you have varicose veins or hemorrhoids.

Vitamin E: Good for strengthening tissue and as an antioxidant. Be sure to get one with mixed-tocopherols.

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B-complex: A supplement with the B-family. Use if there are additional stresses in your life along with a multivitamin. It could also be used instead of a multivitamin in the morning with a multi-mineral taken at night.

Vitamin D: Good for many different skin problems, boosts the immune system, and helps with bone health. Our bodies make Vitamin D when exposed to sunlight. Take into consideration the amount in a multivitamin, the amount in a calcium supplement, the weather/season where you live, and how much sun exposure you are currently getting.

Fiber: Found in abundance in plant foods. If more is needed than what is coming from the diet, then add ground flax seeds to your food or look for one of the Renew Life brand of fiber supplements.

Zinc: Another supplement to consider if you are feeling under the weather or often exposed to un-well people or lots of germs. This supplement is especially good for the rapidly growing cells in your body and your fetus.