

Podcast: Pregnancy Nutrition Made Simple - Taking Back Birth Episode 4

Date: June 19, 2013

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**Synopsis:** *In this episode of Taking Back Birth, I do my best to break down the basics of why nutrition is so important during pregnancy. Here are just a few of the things I discuss...*

- *Basic concepts for good nutrition that just about any woman with any diet type can use.*
- *Why supplying your body with the best possible nutrition during pregnancy is so important.*
- *What you need to know about nutrition and what it does to the volume of blood in your body during pregnancy. Most women don't know this!*
- *How proper nutrition during pregnancy can affect your milk supply.*
- *Why you shouldn't focus too much on weight gain and what you SHOULD pay attention to instead.*

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### INTRODUCTORY MUSIC...

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**MARYN:** Welcome to Indie Birth *Taking Birth Back* series of podcasts here on iTunes. Today's podcast is about nutrition. One word: seems simple; *should* be relatively simple! So let's see how it goes. Nutrition in pregnancy! The best prenatal care, really, is nutrition: feeding your body when you're pregnant. Absolute best thing you can do for yourself and your baby.

Nutrition is definitely the one single thing that most midwives, at least, agree upon and acknowledge that will affect the pregnancy and the birth outcome, as well as the post-partum period. So, it's been proven that good nutrition can prevent complications in pregnancy: preterm birth, premature rupture of membranes (waters opening before birth, before it's time), low birth weight and pre-eclampsia. Those four in particular. Some women, of course, may develop them, regardless, because there are certainly other factors involved, but nutrition is still the best defense that we know about.

So, good nutrition: what is that? It's optimal health for us and our babies. It might mean something slightly different for everybody. But I'm hoping today to kind-of give you a *general* sense about what I think good nutrition is, based on what I've learned and seen over the years, both with other women and myself. I think there's a lot to think about, as simple as it sounds: what we put in our mouths; how this *literally* forms the cells of our babies and allows our babies to grow and thrive. But there's so much we *don't* know about the way prenatal nutrition affects us, really, and our baby's long-term health; as that baby becomes an adult and as that baby begins to have children. So, that's the really big picture that we think about nutrition: to not, you know, have any complications during pregnancy and birth, but also for the bigger picture, because we're affecting generations to come, literally, with what we put in our mouth and how we treat our bodies.

So, what *IS* good nutrition? What does that *mean*? It means something slightly different to everybody, like I've said, perhaps. So I'll give you my spiel, and you can decide what you think and how it fits into *your* life and what *you* think and what *you've* learned. Why is good nutrition important? We've talked a little bit already about why it would be important.

So, this is a pretty *basic* talk. There are literally books, books upon books, about prenatal nutrition; about nutrition in general. So I'm trying to make it simple today, since this is a podcast and hopefully something that you can listen to easily, without investing tons of time. I want to talk about some basic concepts that I think women with any diet type can implement, at least I hope so. I admittedly, am a carnivore and omnivore. I eat pretty much everything at this point in my life, as far as good groups. However, I've had, personally, a vegetarian pregnancy. That was my second. And, of course, I've helped women of *all* food types. So: vegetarians, vegans, raw-foodists, women that stick to the paleo or grain-free diet. So, I'm not an expert in all of those things for sure, but I'm hoping that the tips given today you can apply to your own life.

So the first thing is that I think eating in pregnancy is a different animal than eating when we're *not* pregnant. And again, I think we're all different enough, just in the way our bodies are made or our lifestyle. We may or may not recognize the difference: pre-pregnancy and during pregnancy. Some of us may *really* feel the difference, just in the amount of food or type of food we're able to eat. But I would argue that it is *definitely* different - even if it's not something you're feeling a whole lot, at least at the beginning - simply because the *process* is different. I mean, *obviously*, as full-grown adults we just don't require the same amount of food, perhaps, and definitely, not the same vitamin and mineral requirements that we do when we're *building a person*, cell by cell; and building their brain and, you know, giving them fat and muscles. So, it probably goes without saying, but it *is* a different animal. So if you haven't thought about that, and I know some women don't: they just assume they're going to continue on and they may be able to continue on, depending on how well they were eating before pregnancy. But I think just tucking it away in your brain that it *is* different and to be open to your body asking for different requirements along the way is, you know, a possibility.

So, *why* do we want to supply our bodies with the best possible nutrition in pregnancy? Now we said already that good nutrition is the one single thing that we *know* - at least as midwives - we *know* that this affects pregnancy. We *know* that it prevents complications. But why is this? It's a very simple reason. Our bodies, when pregnant, at about 8 weeks of pregnancy, start to slowly build up our blood supply; our blood volume. So, by the time we're about 28 to 32 weeks pregnant, we've pretty much *doubled* our blood volume. So, 50 to, some say, 60 percent more blood flowing through your veins than when you weren't pregnant. Now, how amazing is that, right? Because we *need* that extra blood. We *need* it! Obviously! There's a growing person and almost more importantly, there's a placenta that needs this blood supply so that it can, in turn, supply the baby. So, the growing placenta needs the blood. The baby needs the blood. Your body is working slightly differently: the way your organs need to function in pregnancy. And your body is needing to be maintained. So your organs - for example, your liver and your kidneys - *definitely, for sure*, take on an extra load in pregnancy. It's just a fact. You know? The kidneys have to work extra hard to filter the baby, as well as yourself. And the liver is working extra hard to do the same kind of detox job that it always does. But it needs an extra blood supply to do this. It just can't keep going with the same amount of blood you had before. And again, if it were to keep going, with that minimal blood supply, that's when you would start to see problems, in most cases. That's when you would start to see complications like pre-term birth, maybe, or pre-eclampsia, simply because the body is overwhelmed with the job it has to do and the lack of resources it has to do it with.

So, the expanding of the blood volume is very much a key concept. And if you've heard of the Brewer Diet, the Brewer Diet definitely focuses the whole entire pregnancy diet on this concept. So, it's definitely not something I've come up with. It's definitely not something super-new, but

it's something that most women *don't* seem to know about. And I think it's important, not just from sort-of a *scientific* point of view (because understanding it, you know, gives you the resources to know what's going on with your body) but I think can give us *confidence*, you know? That if we're able to supply our body with this extra blood supply, and the way we do that - and we'll get to that in more detail - is *through food*, is through nutrients. And when we're able to supply our body with that, you know, we should be *pretty well* assured that we will have smooth, healthy pregnancies. That's the general idea.

So we want this extra blood supply so that our body can work well on every level. Placenta, baby: everybody's happy and taken care of. We can avoid pregnancy complications this way, and we're going to *feel good*. You know, I've, you know, talked to women and walked with women that did not accomplish this blood supply expansion, for one reason or another. And in most cases, they just *really* don't feel good towards the middle of pregnancy. And that's a time when you should really, you know, feel great, and the baby's growing at a good rate.

The blood volume expansion, as well, helps with, you know, having a normal functional labor. Why? Because it's like an athlete preparing for a race. You know, you've done the training and your body is prepped. Same with labor. When you've built up this extra blood supply, and, you're, you know, everything your body needs is there, then, ideally, you're able to go through labor just, you know, *normally*. Your body isn't struggling. You can handle it. The mom can handle it and the baby can handle it. And the baby comes at full term when the baby is ready, and not preterm. And the baby is healthy and, you know, appropriate-sized for the mom. These are all bonuses, benefits, reasons to think about nutrition and expand that blood volume.

Another reason is being *able* to lose some blood at birth. I think bleeding at birth is probably on the top three fears of most women; hospital birth or home-birth, even. And, losing a little blood at birth can and is certainly normal. But building up your blood supply allows you to, you know, lose some and not be in the negative. Let's put it that way. So that's another bonus. And, you know, *not* losing too much blood at birth means you feel good after birth. You don't feel run-down and weak. And you're able to take care of your newborn and nurse your newborn.

And that is a final benefit: is that building up your blood volume *in* pregnancy means that you're usually pretty successful with breast-feeding because you've built up *your* fat supply. And we need fat. We need fat in pregnancy and we need fat to make milk and support a newborn. Plus, having a newborn can just be a challenge in many ways; emotionally and mentally. And feeling good physically only makes it that much easier.

So, there are many ways to get to the goal of blood-volume expansion, in the sense of us all being individuals and requiring certain different things. But it comes down to *doing this through our food*. It depends on the source that you look at, and there are many out there. But mainstream source - the American Pregnancy Association - says you need about 200-300 extra calories a day. Hmm. It's possible, for some. For some of us, we need a lot more. I don't tend to think about, for me, extra calories per day, because it's not something I focus on in my normal life; calories, that is. So I prefer thinking about overall calories when pregnant, a la the Brewer Diet, which we'll talk more about in a minute. And he says about 2700 a day. So, we'll talk more about that.

But, my point is, depending on the source, you're going to read *lots* of different things about what's the requirement for pregnancy. And I feel like, in the more mainstream sources - where

no one's really talking about the Brewer Diet, or blood volume expansion - there tends to be this feeling of restriction in the sense of: *we don't want women to gain too much!* And, to me, that's the general *medical* opinion about weight gain during pregnancy, is there's not a focus on *quality*, and nutrient-dense foods. There's this very narrow focus on: *not too much weight gain!* Because I think, you know, that they think that means an overly large baby or something. Instead, I ask you to, you know, certainly check out those sources; make your own choices but to consider focusing on quality: what goes in your mouth and how good it is for you, rather than a number on the scale. Which is easier said than done. I mean, for myself as well. I think many of us as pregnant women can get carried away, with, you know, thinking about a number or what we wind up post-pregnancy or how we'll lose it and all these food and weight issues that we have the potential to carry. But in an ideal world, you know, eat for your baby, eat for your health during pregnancy and don't concern yourself with weight gain because we're all different. And some of us will gain a whole lot eating well, and some of us won't. And the point is: eating well. I don't think we should be overly focused on weight gain, but, again, *quality*.

Okay. So, into some of the nitty-gritty. What are some basic concepts of what I consider good nutrition? Now, we've talked about expanding the blood volume, which is very much a Brewer Diet concept. And I do appreciate the Brewer diet, so you'll hear me mention it, you know, probably a handful more times. And I think it's, you know, got a lot of good in it and my intent isn't to redo that or to take credit for it *at all*. However, I'm definitely going to add some of *my own* opinion into what I'm about to tell you, *because*. Because, it's, you know, things I've learned and things I feel work well. So, it's kind of a combo; a little combo of what I think makes up good nutrition.

So, when I'm trying to break it down for somebody as simply as possible, I say it's about *quality*; quality of our food. So *whole foods*, meaning things that come from the ground, from the earth, from an animal. And it's that old, you know, perimeter of the grocery store idea. Not going for a whole lot of foods in the aisles, because *that* stuff is boxed and bagged and canned and frozen. If we stay on the perimeter, in most cases, we've got whole foods. So, reading labels is important. And if you're buying whole foods, there aren't too many ingredients, usually. Maybe just a couple. Usually just one. But if you're venturing into other items in the store, then you're gonna wanna read labels. And less is definitely more. So, anything with artificial color, you know, yellow #5, hydrogenated oils, anything unpronounceable, is best left behind, especially in pregnancy, as best you can.

So when we're talking about quality, *organic* - the label organic - definitely comes into the conversation. Products labelled organic don't necessarily mean healthy. You can see that if you go into the store and there are organic, you know, cheese puffs and cookies, that kind of thing. Although they may be made of better ingredients than the conventional equipment. Organic is also, potentially, in most cases, a label that can be bought, if you're a farmer or manufacturer of food, that you apply to the government for. Meaning that you promise not to use pesticides or toxins when growing your food. So, it's a pretty good qualification, but it's not across-the-board perfect. In fact, many local farmers or local purveyors of, you know, local food, may *not* be able to afford the label "organic". So, while it *is* something to look for, it may not apply in certain cases. And again, with local produce, in particular, it may not *be* organic, for sure, but you can ask, for sure, about their growing methods and whether or not they use pesticides, and antibiotics, chemicals, that sort of thing. But for simple purposes, of course, organic does imply higher quality in the sense of leaving the pesticides behind. So, especially when it comes to fruits and vegetables, it's a good way to go. If cost is an issue, organics are at least slightly

more expensive than conventional produce. You can buy conventional produce and wash it or buy a pesticide-removing-type cleaner. You know, some people only buy organics for certain *types* of produce. There's a list, probably on the internet, about the products that you definitely want to buy organic. So, leaf lettuces and apples and tomatoes, for sure, and then the items with thicker skin - like bananas or avocados - although preferable to have them be organic, they're sort of lower down on the totem pole, I guess, of pesticides being able to get into the produce. So, you do the best you can with that, knowing that the best-quality foods are without any chemicals, when possible.

Also, part of our discussion is the discussion about GMO products and produce. So that's Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) and you could read about this online for a long time. So, I won't pretend to be an expert on it. But, GMO's are being added to our food sources, sometimes and a lot of the times, without us even knowing. And I think most would agree that they're *definitely* dangerous and we don't have enough evidence, at this point, with research to say *how* they might affect a pregnancy, or a placenta, or a baby or a birth, but a lot of people are guessing that there *will be* evidence at some point. And that even if there wasn't, that they're still pretty dangerous and that it's best to stay away from GMO's at all costs, really. So the thing about GMO products is that sometimes - and I find this to be confusing, in a way - organic products can still have GMO's. So when you're reading labels, or asking about produce, or talking to a farmer, you know, GMO is kind of separate from being organic or not. So you want to look at the label and make sure it says "non-GMO", even if it is, especially, a box of cookies or crackers, because it seems that GMO's are *really* prevalent in the grain products; so, corn and wheat in particular. So that's something to look out for. And there are quite a bit of resources online, as well, that list GMO products, like, brand names, so that if you're questioning it; you can't find whether it is GMO or not, when you're looking at it in the store, you can certainly go online and almost always locate it and find out. And the truth is, if the label isn't saying *non-GMO*, well, chances are, it probably contains GMO's. But, if you want to be sure, you can go look that up and just try and stay away from all of the toxins and pesticides in foods whenever possible. So, that's the thing about quality, for sure.

The other thing about organics is that, you know, potentially, allegedly, they have a wider range of nutrients. As you can notice with fruits and vegetables in general, you know, greater spectrum of colors, so, more colors (naturally-occurring, of course), mean more vitamins and minerals. So, that's a great thing. So, quality: we've spoken a little bit about quality being really important.

What about quantity? I find this to be rather relevant with the women that I work with and for myself, even, at times. That the quality can be really great - and that's a wonderful thing, to have access to good food - but sometimes the quantity is *not* enough, and as great as your food may be, if the calories just aren't there, and it's not enough for *your* body to do the job of growing a baby, and a placenta, and an extra blood supply, then it's not good enough. So we need quality *and* we need quantity. As far as quantity, how many calories a day? Again, as I said, I like to think that Dr. Brewer was pretty close with his average, which was about 2700 calories a day, for the average woman. And, we have to remember that any number, pretty much, that we're given in pregnancy, for just about anything, *is* an average and we may require more or less. So, what number pregnancy is this for you? If you've had a bunch, especially close together, then your body may *be* more depleted and you may need more calories; just something to keep in mind. If you are nursing another baby or a toddler, you may need more calories. If you're really active, whether that's, you know, you're gardening all day or you're exercising - strenuously or not - or you're chasing your kids around, that may play into how

many calories you need. And stress level: and stress can be emotional and mental stress; it can be physical stress. Some people have jobs where they stand up all day or work all night, and that definitely adds stress to the body, and the body therefore needs more calories in pregnancy to get the job done.

So, the reason calories are so important is that the placenta uses them. You know, I think we think the obvious - which is probably also true - that the extra calories are just needed to grow a baby, because the baby is, you know, extra. But, the placenta is just as, if not more important than that, because the placenta is responsible for feeding the baby, and keeping the baby alive, and allowing the baby to grow at an appropriate rate; in a healthy way. So, restricting calories - whether someone does that intentionally or not - means that the placenta gets less blood supply. And generally speaking, this means a *smaller* placenta that functions *less* optimally. So really, just think about it: the blood, you know, in the placenta, and going through the umbilical cord to the baby, whose entire lifeline *depends* on that blood supply. We want a *good* blood supply and we want the placenta to be a *good* healthy size, so that the blood supply is optimum. So calories are *really* important. And for women that, you know, may be restricting calories because someone told them to; or maybe they started pregnancy overweight and they think that gives them permission to restrict calories during pregnancy: we need to tell them, and they need to know, that *they still need calories*. Whether or not it's 2700 a day is up for discussion, you know, depending on *their* needs. But, calories *are* needed. We *cannot* skimp on calories during pregnancy.

However, there needs to be a balance of protein and calories. So that means you can't have one without the other. And most of the time, it's pretty simple to do, if you are, in fact, getting protein, to get calories. Most protein-rich foods, such as dairy, meats, you know, those kinds of things, also are pretty high in calories. So what this is *really* referring to is no protein supplements! And that's really important to point out, especially when we're mentioning the Brewer Diet, because the Brewer Diet, I believe, is *fabulous*. However, the bad reputation that it may have gotten along the years is a miscommunication about the need for protein. Now, the Brewer Diet calls for 75-100 grams of protein a day. However, *he* meant *whole-food protein*. (And we'll talk about that in a minute.) But he did *not* mean protein supplements. So this *unbalanced* protein, (because it *is* unbalanced when it comes from, say, a soy powder, or some kind of bar), it's unbalanced because it does not have the calories and fat that would normally accompany sort-of a typical source of protein, like a piece of meat. So unbalanced protein, you know, has been shown in studies to contribute to poor outcomes. So there's actually a *higher* rate of pregnancy complications in women that supplement protein with non-food sources, or manufactured sorts of sources.

However, on a *positive* note, the *balance* of protein and calories, which, again, is ideal - and that would come from food, *real food* sources. Those studies have shown a *reduced* risk for small-to-date babies, a reduced stillbirth rate and neonatal death rate. So we have some pretty concrete proof that *real food* contributes to better outcomes. And again, it's *really* important to mention that. Even among the very healthy, educated women that I had the privilege of working with, there's not always that understanding. So, when we're talking about 75-100 grams of protein, many women, without the information, will say, "Oh, well I had a protein bar." Or, "Oh, I have this protein mix." And that is not what we're talking about. Not that you can't do that occasionally, but it's just not an appropriate source of protein for pregnancy.

So, on to protein. Again, Dr. Brewer stressed the protein. And again, that's been blown out of proportion, depending on what you read. But really, I think he had it right. I think 75-100 grams, AVERAGE, is appropriate. And again that can mean 60 for some women, that can mean over 100 for other women. But the protein is what's growing the baby, essentially, and also expanding the blood supply. So, in balance, with calories: this, you know, this is optimum. This is optimum health.

Now, the protein sources can be varied, of course, depending on your diet. If we're talking about *quality*, and we're talking about meat-eating people, then, organic, again, is great and preferable. Grass-fed is even better because we have the balance of omega fatty acids there. And pastured, you know, if it's chicken. So, to know what the chicken are eating, and hopefully it's not antibiotics and grains. So, we can get pretty picky with our meat and that means asking questions, finding out the source, talking to the farmers; sometimes looking long and hard in your community for really great sources of meat that you feel that you can trust. And that are the best for your family. The same goes for fish, which is another good source of protein. Canned tuna? Not so much. We do have to be aware of mercury levels in the bigger fish. And, unless, you know, you're able to buy the cans of tuna that maybe Whole Foods has, (or those kinds of specialty stores, where, you can kinda be assured, at least by the label, that the mercury-content is low-to-nothing) then, I would say, that maybe that's not the best choice, unfortunately, in this day and age. Dairy, of course, is a great source of protein. And, for me, in my community and my family, raw dairy is a very important part and not everybody knows a lot about raw dairy. Not everybody kinda accepts the concept. But, the basic concept is that all the good bacteria are left in. It's not heated and homogenized to destroy all the good stuff. I guess the detractors from raw dairy would say there's the potential of bacteria. But I feel like that's something we all need to consider at our own risk. And again, that would be finding out the source, talking to the farm, seeing what their methods are, as far as cleanliness, with, say, raw milk. But, if you have any sensitivity to dairy, it's worth trying. It's worth trying raw dairy because many people that are sensitive can tolerate raw dairy. And especially in pregnancy, it can just be easier on the stomach. Full-fat dairy, of course, so if you're going to do yogurt, hopefully, cottage cheese, sour cream, that not only is it organic but it is full-fat. No skimping on the fat in pregnancy!

For our vegetarian friends and vegan friends, of course there are plenty of plant-sources of protein - beans, lentils, quinoa, chia seeds, nuts - all kinds of combinations of those things. So, you know, what your source is obviously depends on what your diet is. And then, if you need to, to kinda get started, you'll have to just look at serving size and how much protein per portion. Kinda get a sense of how much protein you're getting in a day, and access from there, as far as if you need more or less depending on Dr. Brewer's recommendations and your own needs and how you feel, and that kind of thing.

Eggs, of course, are another good source of protein and there's probably a million more. I'm sort-of trying to hit the absolute basics here and just explain *why* each category is important. Can't possibly talk about every food in every category.

So, as mentioned, let's say a little bit more about good fats: essential to building the baby's brain. *Essential!* And that is one of the key points that I've seen be radically different in pregnancy. So what I mean by that is, people think, "Oh, I don't need to eat that different in pregnancy; I already eat great!" Or, "I already eat enough!" But something, for many women, that needs to change is this, this way of eating low-calorie, low-fat, low-fat in dairy foods. Now, that may or may not be the choice you wanna make when you're *not* pregnant, but I just want to

give you the information that full-fat is appropriate for pregnancy. Your baby's brain relies on it. So please, don't skimp. No 2% milk. No low-fat cheese. Go for the full fat. Enjoy it. Use lots of butter. Add cream to your milk. Add cream to whatever you can. The calories are really important, and that's, of course, if you do dairy. If you don't do dairy, or even if you do, the other sources of good fats would be avocados, nuts, nut butter, coconut oil: lots of oils, really. And you can use those things just in cooking and salad dressings; on vegetables. So, you get creative when you're pregnant, for sure, if you haven't already. And when you're really trying to make the most of every bite you put in your mouth, you find there's all kinds of combinations and ways to go to add these things to your diet. I think that's really important.

So the next category would be carbohydrates. And that of course, as we know, leads for energy but also the growing of the placenta and just general expanding your blood volume. Now carbs, of course, can come in the form of whole-grains. So if you're going to do grains as your source of carbs, then let's make sure they're whole grains. So usually you'd wanna check the label for that. But then, there's also just whole-grain sources, such as quinoa and rice and lentils. Soaked and sprouted greens are allegedly healthier, at least better for your digestion. So you can soak and sprout your *own* grains and nuts and seeds or you can buy them that way. It's usually pretty expensive, but they do make sprouted breads. So, if you're going to do grains, that's a great idea. And if you're not going to do grains, because some people don't in pregnancy and otherwise, then you obviously just sorta want to bulk up on the fresh vegetables and maybe more root vegetables, if that appeals to you and feels good on your body. So, sweet potatoes and potatoes and quinoa. Quinoa is technically not a grain. It's a seed. So, it's all about balance but it's about just being aware, of course, of what's needed.

A really important category, *I think*, and this is something that *I* don't see being talked about with the Brewer Diet, is the category of fermented foods and good bacteria in your diet. Now, the truth is, you can also take a probiotic, which is just a pill or a powder. But there are so many benefits to having the bacteria in your food and to having these things at every meal or at least a couple times a day. So you can read about the benefits of fermented foods, if you're not familiar. The easiest example would be a whole-milk plain yogurt. They even make cultured (which is another way of saying fermented), cultured sour cream and cottage cheese. Now lots of things that sort of weren't cultured you can now get cultured. Kombucha is a popular beverage and that is fermented. Plain old vegetables can be fermented, such as sauerkraut. And you can make your own of those sorts of things pretty easy, and buy them pretty easily. So the reason it's so important is maybe obvious. In pregnancy, and even when not, keeping your gut flora in order is very helpful. In pregnancy, it's going to be helpful so that your digestive system is operating properly and easily because things *can* sort-of take a change; make a change. And really help immunity. So even if you're just taking probiotics, can really help immunity, especially through a winter when everybody's exposed to germs and getting sick.

And, thanks to the amazing midwife, Gail Hart, who I must give credit to, we must consider how great things like yogurt are, and other fermented foods are, for our vaginal health, which is very important during pregnancy, for obvious reasons. The most obvious being, you know, the baby coming through for a vaginal birth. But also during pregnancy, just because we *can* be more susceptible to infection such as yeast, or bacterial vaginosis, simply because of the change of pH and bacteria that, in her words, we like to have flora culture. So, she explains it, in the way of seeding your garden - you know, your vegetable garden outside with good stuff in the soil to make the vegetables grow - that we want to do the same thing vaginally. And we can do that really pretty simply with food. Again, even if it's just *plain* yogurt and not yogurt with, you know,

the fruit added. That's not what I'm talking about. Plain yogurt, or kefir, which is a yogurt-fermented kind of, yogurt beverage. I'm not an expert on fermented foods. I sort of have the ones that I do. But if you were interested, there's all kinds of books and people out there that know how to ferment just about everything and make all kinds of, you know, water kefir and different things. So, it's definitely a cool project and even, you know, if you only buy them at the store, that's okay. But the reasoning, I think, is sound. And I think it's a very important part of good pregnancy nutrition that most often gets overlooked. And I don't know if that's because, in some circles, fermented foods are just, people don't know about them or maybe they think they're gross. I don't know. But even if you don't know anything, it's something new to learn; something new to try. And you may really like them. And again, if worse comes to worse, and you just really don't, probiotics are the supplemental way of getting those things, at least in your gut.

So, we've covered a bunch. I've a few more things to add. How about sea salt? Sea salt is *super-important* during pregnancy. In fact, I could probably do a whole pod cast on sea salt. But, let's keep it brief for today; that sea salt is not iodized salt. So, check your labels. Look what you're buying in the store. You want *real* sea salt, which can be trickier to find. And in my conventional grocery store here, they really don't sell a good sea salt. It's *labeled* sea salt, but I can tell it's very processed and it's bleached. And ideally, that's not what you're looking for. It's not a whole lot better than iodized, except for the fact that iodine has been left out. So, if you can go into a natural store, Whole Foods, or whatever, you're sort of looking for the most mineral-dense; most raw. There's a pink salt that's really great. And you can do your research ahead of time. So you want the salt that has sort-of been the least processed; the most from the sea that you can possibly get. And the reason is that this salt has minerals from the earth. Iodized is not. Everything has been taken out and bleached and the minerals are just not there. The reason you want the minerals is so that your system, your blood, your circulatory system, your cardiovascular system, can function optimally. And fluids are really important in pregnancy, right? And we've already talked about quality, but the *minerals* are needed. And sure, you're getting minerals from the good food that you're eating. But, they need to be in balance and circulating in your system, so that your body can actually absorb them and *use* the good food that you're eating. In addition (and again, this could be a whole 'nother podcast) *real* sea salt is going to keep you from swelling, at least in a pathological way (meaning a *bad* way). You know, some will say that adding good sea salt to your diet consistently will mean that, you know, you may avoid pre-eclampsia and other kinds of issues. Because it helps the blood volume expand by the way it attracts fluids in your body. So it's not at all what you'll read in a traditional mainstream pregnancy diet book, which is to keep off the salt. If you're swelling, lay off the salt. And they're right, in the sense of that being table salt. Again, the iodized salt or the many forms of salt that exist: monosodium glutamate (MSG), that's a form of salt. Yes, we want to limit those kinds of salts. The salt in processed hot dogs and the lunch meats with nitrates. We want to limit *that* kind of salt. Again, I can't stress enough that *that is not sea salt*. Sea salt is good. And you must go to an extent to find a good source. And then you *want* to be adding that to your food. You want to be. In fact, Dr. Brewer did do a study, in his time, where he fed the same woman the same meal at different points in her pregnancy. And as she became more pregnant, she automatically would add more salt to her meal. So, it does help with the blood volume expansion and it's considered an essential part of good pregnancy nutrition.

Some other minor points. Sort of minor. For most of us, it's eating, snacking, taking a few bites of food every couple hours, really. That going 6-8 hours, like we may have done when we weren't pregnant, is just usually not going to work anymore. Now, for some it might, especially

overnight. I've met many women who didn't feel the need to eat overnight. Well, not going to force anybody to eat overnight. I am not one of them, at least when I get later in pregnancy. I can't go 8 hours at night, and if I do, I just simply don't sleep. It's not necessarily that I feel hungry, it's just, I can't get to sleep. So, eating every two hours is optimum in the sense of keeping your blood sugar stable. No huge lows. And kind of just keeping you level. I mean, when the baby's really growing, I feel like having something every couple of hours is kind, in the sense of the baby getting fed too. So, I feel like going 6-8 hours is just too much in most cases. And if that woman were to start eating every two hours, she would feel better. And she may not even notice that she didn't feel great. But once she starts eating every 2 hours, her appetite may increase and she just may have more energy. So, it's something to try. It's a pretty low-risk thing to try. And always including protein. So again, not protein supplements, but maybe a *handful* of nuts. We're not talking a lot of food, here, every two hours. You know, just a handful. A chunk of cheese, an apple, that kind of thing. Not a meal, necessarily.

Limiting sugar, to me, is part of good nutrition. And, it's not that we can't have treats. So, I think that this gets hard because women want to be as perfect as they can in pregnancy. And the truth is, no one's perfect. And we all have things we eat that we shouldn't, possibly. And sometimes it's hard to be honest about them. So, you only need to be honest with yourself. And a lot of women have a true sugar addiction, especially during pregnancy. There can be a couple reasons for this. Two of the most *popular?* reasons, I suppose, are a need for more protein. So, really craving sugar can mean you're just not getting the protein in your diet. And/or it can mean you're just not getting enough fluids. So you're dehydrated and you start craving things like sugars in fruit, for example. It's probably really the fluid you're craving. Again, we do the best we can. And my rule, at least for myself is, if I really feel like I need a treat of some kind, so, say, ice cream, brownie, that kind of thing, that I try to make it homemade. So, ice cream, for example. You know, even if you're non-dairy, you can use coconut milk. That's a great, very rich in calorie and fat treat. So we can use really good ingredients and simple ingredients to make the treat we want. And balancing them with proteins is also great. So the ice-cream example: make homemade ice cream. Or you can buy, for sure, really high-quality in coconut milk ice cream. It's one of my favorites. So, I'm not non-dairy but I love coconut ice cream. And they make a really great organic one. And I can add some nuts to it, or fruit or both, and feel just a little bit more balanced. So it's not that we can never have treats. It's just, let's make the most of what we put in our mouths. And, let's recognize that too much sugar over the course of the day (and again, that can come in the form of fruits, even) too much sugar *is* taking away from more valuable things we could put in our mouths. And, the truth is, too much sugar (and this is more someone binging, maybe, on a bag of candy, say at Halloween, or, whatever, take your pick) this *really* is dangerous for the baby. It's not "just sugar is bad because it rots your teeth" and that kind of thing. It can stress a baby *severely*. Severely. So, a bag of candy is just not appropriate for that reason. It can be really dangerous to the baby. So, do your best.

Fluids, talk a little bit about fluids: a quart of fluid per 50 lbs of body weight. So that means that through your pregnancy you're going to naturally require more fluid because you will gain weight. Doesn't include milk and juices. In fact, juices in general would be probably best left out of the diet, except in rare circumstances. So we're talking about water, and pregnancy tea, herbal tea if you do that, maybe. And maybe an electrolyte replacer, just depending on you and where you live and what season it is. That can feel really good. There are recipes for those online you can make yourself. And then there are the ones you can buy such as Emergen-C, even the electrolyte water that they sell. And that can make the difference in how you feel, for sure, when pregnant and not. So don't forget fluids. All the great food in the world isn't going to

do you as much good if you're dehydrated. And being dehydrated definitely can cause complications in pregnancy, on it's own. So, you can eat great and dehydrate yourself while you live in the desert, and wind up in pre-term labor. And that is the truth. So, fluids are great things to get in the habit of drinking. You can measure them out for yourself at the beginning of a day. And many women, I have found, find that helpful. Because then they can see what they're drinking and they know by the end of the day if they really *have* gotten enough. Because it can be hard to tell. You think you have, but you haven't, or visa-versa.

So, finally, just a few words about supplements. We can't possibly talk about every supplement or, you know, why they would be appropriate or when they wouldn't be. I think, for simplicity's sake, it's best to say that let's focus on food first, for sure. For healthy women, even prenatal vitamins have not been shown in studies to have a great effect. So, I don't believe they're necessary, personally. However, should you feel called to take a prenatal vitam just because it feels right, then you should. And the only requirement that I can think of with those is that they're made from whole foods. Good examples would be New Chapter, which I believe is non-GMO. Rainbow-Lite is another popular one. I'm not sure about the GMO status of that one. But both are considered whole-food vitamins, which means they're supposedly made from whole foods and don't include a whole lot of other chemicals. They may also, and they do, include some helpful herbs and other things like probiotics. So, that's really left up to you. But food should be your first line of defense, for sure. There are supplements, most definitely, that have been shown to really help women in pregnancy. And again, we can't go into *all* of them. But calcium, for one, has been shown to help prevent pre-eclampsia and reduce blood pressure. So, while calcium sources of foods are really great and important, if you are at risk for such things, pre-eclampsia, or your blood pressure becomes an issue, then maybe a calcium supplement is for you. So there is definitely a place for supplements with the research that we have, you know, on certain conditions. Iron is an important one to mention because a lot women out there are taking iron supplements, during pregnancy. And we're talking *pills* here, you know, most likely a prescription iron supplement. So these are *not* harmless. I think that really needs to be communicated. With the prevalence of iron supplements that I see in women that are, especially, under doctor care, I'm usually just floored. So, number one, you would have to be sure that you were actually deficient in iron, actually anemic or needing that. And most women, you know, most women probably aren't. That would be the first thing to check out. And then, even if you were deficient, it could be argued that food would still be your best source of iron. And that's a whole 'nother topic, too but you can research iron sources in food and how to get the most iron out of your food depending on how you cook your food and things like that. So, iron pills, not iron from food, but iron pills, may put you more at risk for gestational diabetes and pre-eclampsia. That's been shown in studies. And they've been associated with intra-uterine growth retardation, IUGR (so a baby that's not growing appropriately for dates), preterm birth and small-for-dates babies. So those things really have been shown, just to kind of balance out that some supplements may be really helpful, and prevent complications, but then some are definitely are not helpful. So, I think we need to look at food for the *primary* source of our needs and then we customize for, you know, our own situations. And we make our own choices the best we can, risks and benefits.

So that almost covers it. You know, signs of getting enough. I think sometimes people wanna know. "Well, I *think* I'm eating well." You know, "I *think* I'm gaining weight appropriately. I mean, how do I know? How do I know if my baby's growing?" Well, that's, that's kind-of a big topic but there are a few signs of your body showing you that it is getting enough. Weight gain may be one of them But, the mainstream advice, at least that I've come across, is a recommended

25-30 pound gain on average. So, again, that may be a lot for you. That may be half of what you should gain during pregnancy. And studies *have* shown that women with low pre-pregnancy weight and low gain prior to 20 weeks *double* their rate of preterm birth. So I *never* forget that fact for some reason. Probably because preterm birth definitely freaks me out. And, you know, low pre-pregnancy weight. So, somebody that is pretty thin, and then they're really not gaining their first 20 weeks. And there may be what's considered good reason. Right? Morning sickness, nausea, vomiting. But, it just makes me nervous, because the studies really *do* show that they *are* at risk of pre-term birth. And I guess, because I've seen it happen. I wouldn't recommend, necessarily, weighing somebody, but it's all in how much they're taking in. So, if you're being honest with the person that you've chosen to work with and you, as the person that's working with women, can be accepting of what women tell you. If people can be as honest as possible, then you can help access somebody's diet as best you can. And if they start off pregnancy lower, on the weight side, then my feeling is they probably need more calories. And you want to see a pretty decent gain before 20 weeks. And that could be a pound a week. It could be more. That's just, you know, that's just the difference of starting pregnancy sort-of below weight. And even if you're above weight, supposedly, you know, before pregnancy, there still is no specific weight to gain, I don't think. I think again, we have to focus on the quality and then other signs. So, as far as weight gain goes, the average is about a pound a week, *after* 20 weeks. So we said *before* 20 weeks is also important that women gain, especially if they were low pre-pregnancy weight. But *after* 20 weeks, most women, regardless of what they were before pregnancy, should gain about a pound a week. And as they hit maximum blood volume expansion, at 28-32 weeks, you're normally going to see a pretty good gain there. And that's blood, it's literal blood. That's what the number on the scale is reflecting. You definitely don't want to see a drop at that point. And again, you may see 2 pounds in a week, at that point. And that would be considered a good sign of expanding the blood volume.

Feeling good. I think that goes without saying. But that means no nausea at 28-32 weeks or after, you know? No beginning vomiting and nausea at that point. That wouldn't be the most healthy sign, although it does happen occasionally. And, you know, there's absolutely nothing wrong. But sort of in a general sense, you feel great, you don't feel sick. There's nothing bothering you, hurting you. You're able to eat. You have an appetite. You just feeling good. This is just a good sign of your body getting enough. Having enough energy; sleeping pretty well. Of course, you're getting up maybe to pee a lot at night. But, in general, this point in pregnancy, which is considered mid-pregnancy, is just a time of feeling pretty good for most women. So again, it doesn't mean something is horribly wrong if you don't feel absolutely great and /or you have, you know, a couple days where you're just not feeling good. But anybody that's really feeling sick and nauseous all the time, at this point, would maybe tip me off to the nutrition not being quite up to what's being asked for by the body.

So, that was a mouthful! I hope *you* got a lot out of that, or at least a little bit that you can pass on, and/or use yourself. We really appreciate you listening here at IndieBirth. And we ask that you sign up for our podcasts; get notification of when we put out a new one. And share with us. Share this recording. Share this information. It is ours to share with you, and who you choose.

A few sources, before we go, as far as the nutrition info for you to look into, would be [drbrewerpregnancydiet.com](http://drbrewerpregnancydiet.com). And again, Dr. Brewer is the source for this sort of thinking. You'll find a lot of information on that website. And some you may take, and some you may leave. But I think the concepts are good and relatively clear.

There's all kinds of information on the Internet as far as fermented foods, sprouting, soaking and sprouting grains. For me that comes from Nourishing Traditions and the Weston Price diet, for one. There's, you know, lots of other, lots of other sources, for sure.

I wanted to credit Gail Hart again. She has a great book called *Research Updates for Midwives*. And even if you're not a midwife you might really enjoy this book. It's full of research about nutrition, for one; preterm birth, group-B strep. She has numerous subjects in there that are just out-of-this-world researched and very informative. So, if you'd like information on any of those things, please be in touch. We will let you know.

Also, we are available here at Indie Birth for consult should you want to discuss something about your pregnancy or have a nutritional session. Or just have somebody, frankly, to look at a food diary. Maybe you've kept a log for the last week and you just want some feedback on it. And we'd be more than happy to do that for you. So just be in touch with us, and we'd be glad to help.

Thanks so much! Have a great day!

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