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Good Nutrition During Pregnancy May Reduce Chronic Disease in Adulthood

Food Insight

NewsBite

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Good nutrition is essential for a healthy pregnancy outcome for both mother and baby. During pregnancy, a woman needs an adequate intake of protein, calcium, iron and folic acid and about 300 extra calories per day in the second and third trimesters. A balanced diet rich in a variety of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, low-fat meat and beans, and other foods can help meet nutrient needs. New research suggests that good nutrition can also reduce the risk for chronic diseases in adulthood such as obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.

Dr. David Barker, a physician and professor of clinical epidemiology at the University of Southampton (UK) and the keynote speaker on the "Fetal Origins of Chronic Adult Disease" at the 2007 Tufts University Friedman School Symposium, suggests that the risk for chronic disease begins during pregnancy or as early as pre-conception as a result of undernutrition. Pregnancy is a crucial period in development for the baby. Poor nutrition during fetal life increases the risk for lower birth weight, leads to impaired weight gain during infancy and childhood, and permanently changes tissues and vital organs such as the heart and kidneys. Studies show that low birth weight is associated with an increased risk of coronary heart disease, hypertension, stroke and Type 2 diabetes.

A woman who follows a healthful diet, exercises, and monitors her weight gain during pregnancy may be able to improve the health of her baby as well as in later life. More information on healthful eating during pregnancy can be found in IFIC Foundation's [Healthy Eating During Pregnancy](#) brochure.

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