

A guide to essential vitamins and minerals for expectant mothers

Pregnancy is a time of joy and anticipation, but it also requires special attention to your health and nutrition. At Anglo Medical Scheme (AMS), we understand the importance of providing the right nutrients for both mother and baby.

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is crucial during pregnancy. This includes a balanced diet, regular physical activity, and avoiding harmful substances such as caffeine, alcohol, and tobacco. While many expectant mothers take multivitamin supplements early in their pregnancy or while trying to conceive, it's important to note that these supplements often contain a variety of vitamins, minerals, and other ingredients that may not all be necessary or recommended for supplementation. Always inform your healthcare professional about any supplements you are taking so they can provide the best advice for your pregnancy.

Here are some key recommendations for essential vitamins and minerals during pregnancy:

Folic Acid: This is crucial for preventing neural tube defects (NTDs) in babies. A daily supplement of 400mcg – 500mcg, ideally starting one month before conception and continuing through the first three months of pregnancy, is highly recommended. In high-risk cases, such as women taking anticonvulsants or with a family history of NTDs, a daily dose of 5mg is advised throughout the pregnancy.

Iron: Iron supplementation can help reduce anaemia in both mother and baby. Low-dose iron preparations (elemental iron \leq 30mg to 60mg/day) are recommended during the 2nd and 3rd trimesters of pregnancy. These should preferably be plain products, or iron combined with low-dose folic acid (400-500mcg/day).

Calcium: Calcium supplementation can reduce the risk of hypertension and pre-eclampsia during pregnancy. Plain calcium products providing a total of 1-2 grams elemental calcium per day should be used.

While Iron and Calcium are both recommended, these two supplements should not be taken together, or be combined in one product. They are both vital nutrients, but they compete for the same absorption pathways in the body. This means that when they are consumed together, they can interfere with each other's absorption. Just take them at different times of the day. For example, one could take an iron supplement in the morning and a calcium supplement in the evening.

It is important to remember that more is not always better when it comes to vitamins and minerals. Certain supplements, such as multivitamin and mineral products, single supplements of Vitamin A, B, C, D, Magnesium, Selenium, Zinc, long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids (LCPUFA), myo-inositol, and probiotics, are not required during pregnancy.

Pregnancy or prenatal vitamins are easily available and should be taken as prescribed. There are many affordable options, with monthly dosing ranging from as little as R40.00 per month.

At AMS, we are here to support you throughout your pregnancy journey. Your health and the health of your baby are our top priorities. For more detailed information, please refer to your benefit guide. Remember, every pregnancy is unique, so always consult with your healthcare provider for personalized advice.

Stay healthy and enjoy this special time!

This article was brought to you by our medicine management team at MediKredit.

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