Healthy start in pregnancy

We are delighted to hear that you are pregnant. This leaflet provides information about things you should consider in order to give you and your baby the best possible start.

Diet and lifestyle

A healthy diet and lifestyle can help you to keep well during pregnancy and give your baby the best possible start in life:

- If you smoke, get advice about stopping. You can talk to your doctor/midwife, visit www.dorsetsmokestop.co.uk or call 0800 0076653.
- Eat a balanced diet. Healthy weight gain in pregnancy significantly reduces your risk of complications during pregnancy and problems when you give birth.
- Read the list of foods that should be avoided in pregnancy overleaf.
- Recent research suggests that avoiding alcohol is the safest option. If, however, you choose to drink, then protect your baby by drinking no more than one or two units of alcohol once or twice a week. Do not get drunk.
- Stay active, moderate exercise is good for you.
- If you or your partner take any medication talk to your doctor about whether it will affect your pregnancy.

What to eat to give your baby the best start

When you are pregnant, your body becomes more efficient in absorbing nutrients, so you do not need to eat for two. To maintain the health of you and your baby, you should:

- Eat a variety of foods to make sure you and your baby get the nutrients you need.
- Include three well balanced meals per day.
- Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day.
- Include starchy foods at each meal. Choose varieties that are high in fibre but low in sugar and fat.
- Include two portions of lean meat, fish, eggs, beans, Quorn or tofu daily.
- Include three portions of low fat yoghurt, milk of cheese every day
- Do not include too many fatty and sugary snacks and drinks

It is recommended that you should take 10mcg of Vitamin D throughout you pregnancy and if you are breastfeeding.
Foods to avoid

You should avoid the following foods:-

- Pate, particularly liver or liver products, as they contain too much vitamin A. Other types of pate including vegetable are also considered unsafe as they can contain listeria
- Shark, swordfish or marlin as they may contain high levels of mercury
- Raw shellfish as they can contain harmful bacteria that can cause food poisoning
- Raw or undercooked meat – there should be no trace of pink or blood
- Raw or partially cooked eggs – to prevent the risk of salmonella food poisoning
- Soft cheeses such as brie, camembert, goat’s cheese, blue veined varieties such as stilton – risk of listeria infection
- Unpasteurised milk, goats or sheep’s milk
- Limit tuna consumption to four medium cans per week

It is also important to:-

- Reduce your caffeine intake to no more than 200mg per day:-
  - One mug of instant coffee = 100mg. Filter coffee = 140mg
  - One cup of tea = 75mg
  - One can of coke = 40mg
  - One bar of plain chocolate – 50mg

- Wash all ready prepared salad items, fruit and vegetables thoroughly. Heat ready meals until they are piping hot all way through.
- Wash all surfaces/utensils and your hands after preparing raw meat, as this will help to avoid infection with toxoplasmosis.
- Always wear gloves when you are gardening or changing cat litter, wash your hands thoroughly. This is to avoid toxoplasmosis.

It is recommended that you take 400mcg of folic acid supplements each day until the 12th week of pregnancy.

Do not take vitamin A supplements or any supplements containing Vitamin A (or Retinol).
Further information

If you need any further information please contact the Maternity Unit on 01305 254267.

If you need this information in large print, easy read, on audiotape or in another language please call 0800 7838058 or e-mail pals@dchft.nhs.uk

If you wish to obtain a list of the sources used to develop this information leaflet please call 0800 7838058 or e-mail patient.info@dchft.nhs.uk

Useful websites

www.nhschoices.co.uk
www.nhs.uk/parents
www.nhs.uk/start4life
www.healthystart.nhs.uk