

Post-natal supplement advice for mothers by Christian Bates

Most mother's will know that before birth you need to supplement folic acid. This in itself is very basic advice as many other nutrients are required for a healthy child and could have been supplemented but folic acid is the most well known and recommended. However, nutrition after the birth is really not covered at all in normal advice so I have put together a few tips on how to best look after yourself and your newborn, all based on medical research and backed by my clinical observations.

New mothers commonly complain about being fuzzy headed, forgetful, experiencing baby blues and tired (obviously!). What follows may be able to help to ease these problems and gradually build your foundation of health again after the birth of your child. As a side note, if you think you are experiencing post-natal depression then you must obviously consult your GP and possibly book in for a full consultation with me if you wanted to look at natural ways to aid yourself. The advice here may assist but really it is too general and not meant for specific medical conditions.

When talking about supplementation it is important to realise that the baby is rated as number one priority by your body when you are carrying it. This means that any nutrients it requires it takes from you. Therefore if you start off deficient in something you will be more deficient after the birth and even if you weren't deficient but didn't keep up a very healthy diet that was able to support you and baby then you again are probably deficient.

There are a number of multi's on the market, I use one from a large company called Thorne. It is suitable for use before, during and after pregnancy and gives all the nutrients essential for pregnancy in safe dosages, which are higher than a one-a-day from the high street. Do not worry about these dosages, these professional supplement companies that are used by health professionals only are all based on orthodox, medical research. On top of this each nutrient will be in a form that is highly absorbable and "active" so it will definitely be used by your body, for example the active form of folic acid is called methyltetrahydrofolate. You will be surprised to find out that 25% of the population cannot absorb folic acid in the "folic acid" form, these people must take methyltetrahydrofolate. This means that some women will not benefit from the folic acid they take at all. The Thorne multi I suggest uses this form, you will find that no high street brand will do this.

To help you understand why you may require a supplement here are a couple of more examples:

Zinc is required for cell division, every time a cell divides it uses up this mineral so you can imagine just how much extra zinc you have used up making your baby. Low zinc levels after birth are also highly linked to post natal depression.

B Vitamins are essential to make all your hormones ie oestrogen and progesterone. You also know that you have been making massive amounts of these hormones and now after pregnancy you will be trying to regulate the balance of the hormones back to normal. B vitamins are also heavily used in the pathways to make energy, and I know any extra energy at this time will be a good thing for you!

Omega 3 fish oils

Fish oils or omega 3 oils have massive amounts of research on them, especially for use during pregnancy and for breast feeding mothers. As I said previously your baby would have just stripped you of the nutrients it requires and considering all its nervous system, including brain, and every single cell requires omega 3 oils you would have been a welcome source for the baby. You have probably guessed where your baby will take this from; that's right, your brain and nervous system! This is why you may have some forgetfulness and fuzzy head feelings. Again, deficiency of omega 3 oils in the new mother is highly linked to post natal depression.

The supplement I use all the time for mothers is called Eskimo-3. This is a very clean and pure fish oil supplement. It is vital to use only a good omega 3 oil at this time, if you are breast feeding, as your baby will also be benefitting from this nutrient by receiving some through your breast milk. For this reason the product you use must be especially clean from pollutants, which Eskimo-3 is. Research has shown that supplementing fish oils is of benefit to both the baby and mother, particularly a type of oil called Docosahexanoic acid (DHA) which Eskimo-3 has in it.

Research on omega 3 oils, benefitting the mother

- Post - partum women have been found to be deficient in omega 3 oils (Mischoulon 2000)
- This decline has been found to be reversible by supplementing 200 – 400 mg/d of DHA (Makrides and Gibson, 2000). This study also found no harmful side effects of DHA supplementation during pregnancy or lactation.
- Worthington, (1979) & Harris et al., (1984) found that mothers must have a good source of DHA herself for it to be passed through the breast milk.
- Other studies have confirmed that the DHA present in the maternal blood and milk was proportional to the DHA supplemented (Hawkes et al., 2002) (Harris et al., 1984).
- An interesting study determined that the major portion of PUFA in the breast milk was actually derived from the mother's maternal stores, rather than current diet (Koletzko et al., 2001). This leads to the conclusion that the long-term maternal diet is of relevance when breast-feeding and that DHA supplementation should start well before breast-feeding.
- The omega -3 fats also assist in depressive states (Raeder et al 2006) (Tanskanen et al 2001) so it can be assumed that they are preventative of post-partum depression.

Research on omega 3 oils, benefitting the newborn

A number of studies have found benefits of supplying the neonate with adequate DHA via breast milk.

- Helland et al (2003) found DHA to augment children's IQ at four years of age.
- Lower visual and neuro-developmental test scores were found with formula fed children as they received no poly unsaturated fatty acids (PUFA) (includes omega 3), this was compared to breast fed children who did receive the essential fatty acids naturally through the breast milk (Agostoni and Giovannini, 2001).
- Other studies have found improvements in visual acuity, cognitive and other neuro-developmental functions in children who received long chain PUFA's, i.e. they were breast fed (Larque et al., 2002; Gil et al., 2003) (Auestad et al., 2003) (Mitmesser and Jensen, 2007) (Tinoco et al., 2007) (Birch et al., 2007).

So to summarise in basic terms, these studies found that babies that were breast fed had higher good fat, omega 3, levels which helped their brain development.

The take-away key points are:

- If you are breast feeding it is beneficial for you to take an omega 3 oil ie Eskimo 3 not only will this replenish your own stores but it will benefit your baby.

- If you are formula feeding then do not worry. Take the omega 3 yourself to help you and when your baby is slightly older they too can supplement for a time with omega 3 oils, in this case Eskimo 3 FOR KIDS. This research shows that it will help them.

Supplement details

Basic pre-natal (good for post natal & lactating mothers too)	from Health Interlink on 01664 810 011
Eskimo -3	from Nutri on 0800 212 742
Eskimo -3 FOR KIDS	from Nutri on 0800 212 742
Culturelle	from Nutri Link 08450 760 402

Adrenal glands

Your adrenals glands are the organs that support your body with hormones in times of stress, which includes delivering a baby and lack of sleep. If the adrenal glands are over-worked and then subsequently fatigue they can cause a myriad of hormonal problems, in fact any hormonal problem can be initially instigated by adrenal gland fatigue. If you feel you are really suffering from fatigue, more than a mother with a newborn should, then please phone me at the clinic and we can talk through some natural health options that are available. In particular the use of an EAV device called the Avatar which can assess the health of your organs via the acupuncture system and also tests to find specific supplements and remedies you need to correct your problems. More information is available at www.christianbates.co.uk

Adrenal fatigue is a common problem in fertility issues, amongst others, so if you know of anyone struggling with conception then please pass on the clinic details and we would be happy to offer some advice.

References:

- Agostoni, C. & Giovannini, M. (2001) Cognitive and visual development: influence of differences in breast and formula fed infants. *Nutrition and health (Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire)*, **15**, 183-188.
- Auestad, N., Scott, D.T., Janowsky, J.S., Jacobsen, C., Carroll, R.E., Montalto, M.B., Halter, R., Qiu, W., Jacobs, J.R., Connor, W.E., Connor, S.L., Taylor, J.A., Neuringer, M., Fitzgerald, K.M. & Hall, R.T. (2003) Visual, cognitive, and language assessments at 39 months: a follow-up study of children fed formulas containing long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids to 1 year of age. *Pediatrics*, **112**, e177-83.
- Birch, E.E., Garfield, S., Castañeda, Y., Hughbanks-Wheaton, D., Uauy, R. & Hoffman, D. (2007) Visual acuity and cognitive outcomes at 4 years of age in a double-blind, randomized trial of long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acid-supplemented infant formula. *Early human development*, **83**, 279-284.
- Harris, W.S., Connor, W.E. & Lindsey, S. (1984) Will dietary omega-3 fatty acids change the composition of human milk? *The American journal of clinical nutrition*, **40**, 780-785.
- Hawkes, J.S., Bryan, D.L., Makrides, M., Neumann, M.A. & Gibson, R.A. (2002) A randomized trial of supplementation with docosahexaenoic acid-rich tuna oil and its effects on the human milk cytokines interleukin 1 beta, interleukin 6, and tumor necrosis factor alpha. *The American journal of clinical nutrition*, **75**, 754-760.
- Helland, I.B., Smith, L., Saarem, K., Saugstad, O.D. & Drevon, C.A. (2003) Maternal supplementation with very-long-chain n-3 fatty acids during pregnancy and lactation augments children's IQ at 4 years of age. *Pediatrics*, **111**, e39-44.

- Koletzko, B., Rodriguez-Palmero, M., Demmelmair, H., Fidler, N., Jensen, R. & Sauerwald, T. (2001) Physiological aspects of human milk lipids. *Early human development*, **65 Suppl**, S3-S18.
- Larque, E., Demmelmair, H. & Koletzko, B. (2002) Perinatal supply and metabolism of long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids: importance for the early development of the nervous system. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, **967**, 299-310.
- Mitmesser, S.H. & Jensen, C.L. (2007) Roles of long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids in the term infant: developmental benefits. *Neonatal network : NN*, **26**, 229-234.
- Makrides, M. & Gibson, R.A. (2000) Long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acid requirements during pregnancy and lactation. *The American journal of clinical nutrition*, **71**, 307S-311S.
- Raeder MB, Steen VM, Vollset SE, Bjelland I. (2006) *Associations between cod liver oil use and symptoms of depression: The Hordaland Health Study* Journal of Affective Disorders. Dec 18
- Tanskanen A, Hibbeln JR, Tuomilehto J, Uutela A, Haukkala A, Viinamaki H, Lehtonen J, Vartiainen E. (2001) *Fish consumption and depressive symptoms in the general population in Finland*. Psychiatr Serv. 52 [4] 529-31
- Tinoco, S.M., Sichieri, R., Moura, A.S., Santos, F. & Carmo, M.G. (2007) [The importance of essential fatty acids and the effect of trans fatty acids in human milk on fetal and neonatal development]. *Cadernos de saúde pública / Ministério da Saúde, Fundação Oswaldo Cruz, Escola Nacional de Saúde Pública*, **23**, 525-534.
- Worthington, B.S. (1979) Nutrition during pregnancy, lactation, and oral contraception. *The Nursing clinics of North America*, **14**, 269-283.