

Energy boosters for mum

Whether you're pregnant, trying to conceive or have just had a baby, you need to be functioning at your best. Naturopath, TV presenter and author Emma Sutherland reveals the superfoods mums should eat and how to sneak them into your day. **By Rachael Spencer-Smith**

Any woman who has been through pregnancy knows that conceiving and carrying a baby, then taking care of a newborn requires bucketloads of energy and good health. This means eating a diet that meets your body's nutritional requirements throughout the three stages of pregnancy – prenatal, pregnancy and postnatal.

Rather than fill your trolley with every fresh fruit and vegetable on offer in your supermarket, and trying to make room for them all in your daily diet, naturopath Emma Sutherland tells us the superfoods that are best for optimum health at each stage of pregnancy.

PRENATAL SUPERFOODS

Asparagus

One cup of asparagus contains nearly two thirds of the recommended daily amount of folate (vitamin B9). This nutrient is critical prior to conception, and vital during the first trimester, because it encourages healthy cell growth and prevents the possibility of birth defects, including spina bifida.

Pomegranate

Studies have shown that this delicious fruit boosts libido. "When people are trying to conceive, sex often becomes a little boring and a little, 'okay, it's that time of the month'," Emma explains. "But research shows that pomegranate boosts libido in men and women. I love the way you can throw it in salads, and you can buy pomegranate juice in most supermarkets now."

Kale and broccoli

Kale has one of the richest nutrient profiles per calorie than any other vegetable, while broccoli contains over 80mcg of the

Specific superfoods will provide your body with its different nutritional needs at each stage of pregnancy.

antioxidant vitamin C as well as 58mcg of folate. "Kale and broccoli are also my two big ones preconception, because they increase your detoxification pathways, making it easier for your body to detoxify," Emma says. "Ideally, you want to complete a detoxification process before you fall pregnant so that your baby doesn't carry your toxic burden."

PREGNANCY SUPERFOODS

Beetroot

This vegetable contains betacyanin, a powerful antioxidant, and folate – both of which have been shown to reduce homocysteine levels (an amino acid that helps the blood to clot). "From an anti-miscarriage point of view, if your blood is clotting too quickly on the placental level, there is an increased chance of miscarriage," Emma says. "Traditionally, beetroot is known as a blood cleanser, because it helps to boost the blood's integrity, which is important because blood carries vital nutrients around the body and delivers them to your baby."

Organic red meat

This is high in easily absorbed iron and vitamin B12. "Your body's blood volume doubles in the second trimester, so if you don't have good stores you are going to become iron deficient, and this just makes you feel tired," Emma says. The last thing you want is to feel exhausted, because pregnancy is a tiring job anyway. But make it organic meat if you can, so that you're not consuming chemicals and pesticides."

Almonds

Not only are almonds rich in protein, which helps to prevent blood-sugar level drops, they also contain plenty of vitamin E, which is good



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for reducing insulin resistance, therefore preventing gestational diabetes. Also, almond milk is high in calcium. "Have it in your smoothies, porridge, or on your cereal", Emma suggests. "This is really helpful in the third trimester, when the ossification of your baby's bones occurs and their bones are hardening, so loading up on calcium-rich foods during this time is really important."

POSTNATAL SUPERFOODS


Turmeric

Current research into turmeric is focused on a compound called curcumin, which reduces many different inflammation pathways. "I love turmeric, because it's anti-inflammatory," Emma says. "So whether you've had a vaginal birth or a Caesarean, there's going to be a lot of inflammation going on. It's also helpful for the prevention of mastitis. Anything that's anti-inflammatory is of such value."

Chia seeds

These are an ideal postnatal superfood because they contain so much protein. This helps to stabilise blood-sugar levels when you are sleep deprived with a newborn, which can cause you to reach for quick-fix, often sugary snacks. "Chia seeds are a water-soluble fibre, so they make you feel full."

Pumpkin and sesame seeds

These are really high in zinc and, from a nutritional point of view, zinc is super important throughout preconception, throughout pregnancy and postnatally. If you are zinc deficient you are more likely to suffer from postnatal depression, and if your baby is zinc deficient it is more likely to be a fussy and difficult baby to settle. "I like my clients to load up on zinc in the first three months after having a baby," Emma reveals. 



Beetroot boosts the blood's integrity.

Snack and meal ideas

Quick and easy ways to include these superfoods in your daily diet:

- ✦ Put chia seeds on your cereal or your porridge every morning, and add a teaspoon of chia seeds to a couple of tablespoons of yoghurt once or twice throughout the day.
 - ✦ Add pomegranate pieces or seeds to salads – it works well with feta, mint and rocket.
 - ✦ Quickly blanch kale then stir-fry with your favourite herbs. Serve with a squeeze of lemon and extra virgin olive oil.
 - ✦ Keep almonds and pumpkin seeds in a zip-lock bag in your handbag to snack on throughout the day.
 - ✦ Include chopped asparagus in a frittata or a risotto.
 - ✦ Add kale to a green smoothie with cucumber, spinach and apple.
 - ✦ Grate beetroot through a salad or make fresh juice using raw beetroot.
 - ✦ Add almond meal to your breakfast cereal for added fibre.
 - ✦ Store fresh turmeric in your freezer, for longevity, and grate it frozen onto salads, or into your scrambled eggs mix.
 - ✦ Add tahini (made from sesame seeds) to your salad dressing, or try it on toast or rice crackers with avocado.
- For more details, visit emmasutherland.com.au

