

Prenatal *Supplement Guide*





Pregnancy Essentials

Living in our busy modern world we see and hear lots about getting our essential nutrients from readily available, often expensive supplements, instead of fresh wholesome foods.

I'm not going to lie, because it sounds amazing getting all of your daily servings of fruits, greens and veggies in one pill, but your body was not made to survive and thrive on supplements and pills alone.



Pregnancy is a time when ...

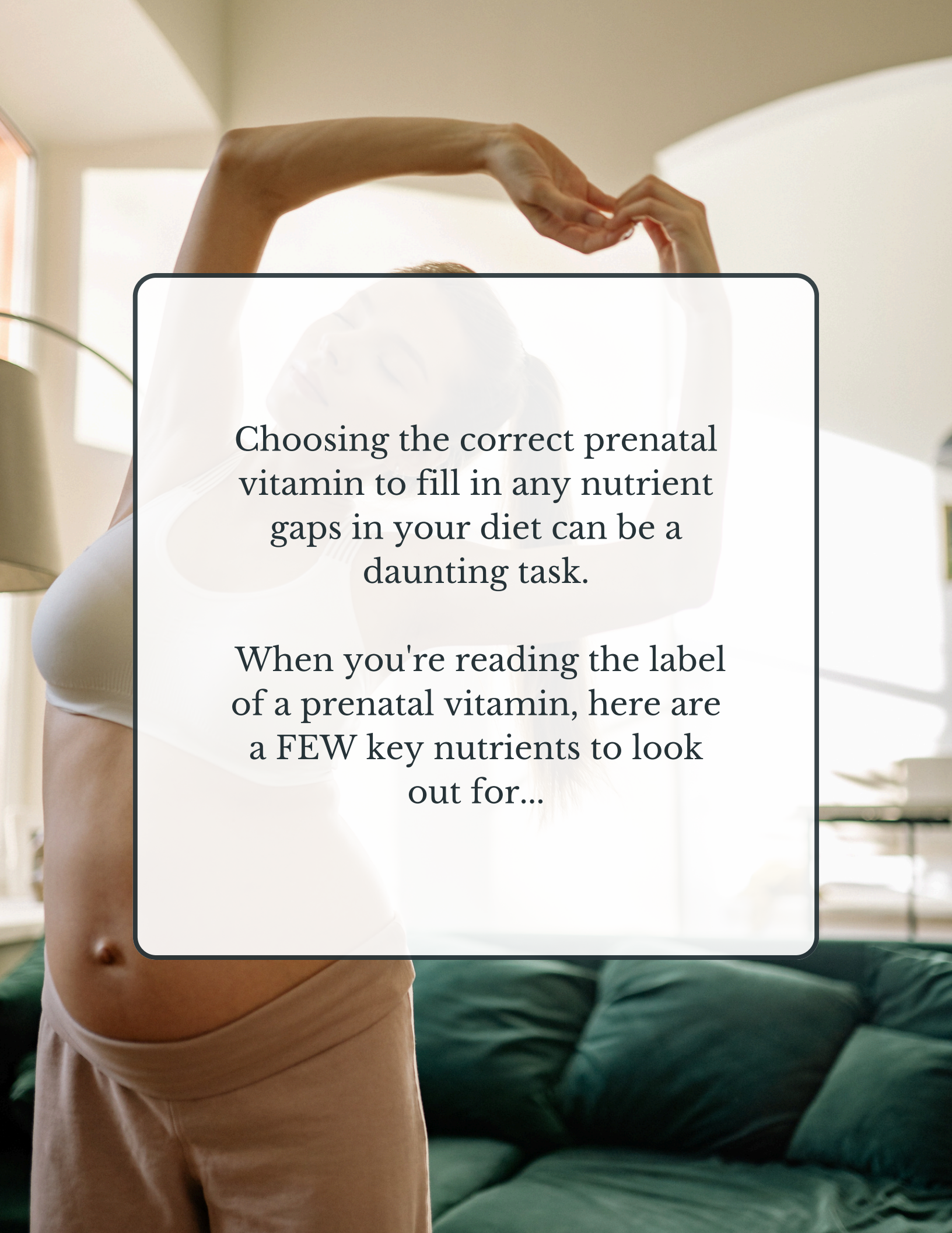
You need to be focusing on whole foods first and foremost, to support your health and the health of your growing baby.

Supplements, however, have an important role to play and they're seen as a safety net to ensure you've got everything covered.

No one has the perfect pregnancy diet and it can often be challenging to get all of your essential nutrients from food alone.

Between morning sickness, cravings, and random food aversions, getting good nutrition during pregnancy, especially in the first trimester, can be tricky.

Investing in a good quality prenatal supplement will cover the nutrients that are lacking in your diet, and this is why they should always be chosen after a nutritional assessment, to make sure you have everything you need.

A pregnant woman is shown from the waist up, wearing a white long-sleeved top and pink pants. She is stretching her arms above her head, with her hands clasped together. The background is a bright, modern living room with a green sofa and a large window. The text is overlaid on a white rounded rectangle with a black border.

Choosing the correct prenatal vitamin to fill in any nutrient gaps in your diet can be a daunting task.

When you're reading the label of a prenatal vitamin, here are a FEW key nutrients to look out for...

Vitamin B9...

FOLIC ACID/FOLATE

Folate and folic acid are both forms of vitamin B9, but they have some important differences.

Folate is a naturally occurring vitamin B9 found in many foods, including leafy green vegetables, fruits, nuts, and legumes. This form of vitamin B9 is readily usable by the body.

On the other hand, Folic Acid is a synthetic form of vitamin B9 that's often added to fortified foods and dietary supplements. This form of vitamin B9 is not naturally occurring in food and must be converted by the body into its active form, which is known as 5-methyltetrahydrofolate (5-MTHF), to be used.

Studies show that taking folic acid supplements can help prevent birth defects. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommend taking a daily supplement of 600 micrograms of folic acid before conception and continuing through pregnancy.

There's limited evidence to make a strong recommendation for the use of folate over folic acid in prenatal supplements, however...



Vitamin B9

FOLIC ACID/FOLATE

The conversion of folic acid into its active form, 5-methyltetrahydrofolate (5-MTHF), is an essential step for the body to use it effectively.

This conversion process requires the action of an enzyme called methylenetetrahydrofolate reductase (MTHFR), which is responsible for converting folic acid into 5-MTHF.

However, some individuals carry a genetic variation that affects the function of the MTHFR enzyme, reducing their ability to convert folic acid into 5-MTHF.

This can lead to a buildup of unmetabolized folic acid in the body and can interfere with the body's ability to use this form of vitamin B9 effectively.

For this reason, it may be a better option for individuals with MTHFR variations to choose a prenatal supplement with folate, ideally 5-MTHF.

This is because the body does not need to convert natural folate into its active form, and it is therefore more easily absorbed and utilized.





Vitamin B9

FOLIC ACID/FOLATE

A large percentage of women (up to 60%) have a defect in their MTHFR gene that doesn't allow them to properly convert synthetic folic acid into active methylfolate. In this case, it's beneficial to consider choosing a prenatal supplement with folate instead of folic acid.

Vitamin B9 is an essential nutrient in a prenatal vitamin. It helps to prevent brain and spine birth defects, known as neural tube defects.

Activated B Vitamins...

1 Activated B vitamins are important to check for as they are easier for your body to metabolise.

2 Being in the "activated" form means that your body has to do less work to gain more out of B vitamins.

3 Most B vitamin added into supplements are the cheaper, inactive forms requiring your liver to convert them.

Examples of "activated" B vitamins include B12, B6 and folate.

Folic acid (folate being the natural form) is one of the most researched nutrients in pregnancy.

Include natural sources of folate in your diet, including leafy greens, legumes, lentils, chickpeas, avocados, eggs, nuts and seeds.





Vitamin B12

Vitamin B12 is essential in the formation of red blood cells and a healthy nervous system.

Women following a vegetarian or vegan diet may find it difficult to get adequate amounts in their diet because plants don't contain vitamin B12. Check for the activated form as quite often the inactive (cheaper) form Cyanocobalamin is added to supplements and is not well absorbed by the body.

Vitamin B6

Vitamin B6 assists in the formation of red blood cells along with the metabolism of protein & fats.

Low levels can be common in pregnancy due to the baby's demands, & also women who have taken the pill are at an increased risk of deficiency.

Research has shown that Vitamin B6 can help control morning sickness.

Include foods containing this too such as chicken, fish, eggs, oats, nuts & seeds.



Choline

I've kept CHOLINE separate from the other B vitamins as this is one that hasn't got much of a mention until more recent years.

This is also a B vitamin & is an important one to remember due to its beneficial effects on brain development, gene expression, placental function and helping to prevent neural tube defects.

Its role is very similar to folate!

The current recommended intake for pregnancy is 450mg a day, & research for the possibility of increasing this is underway, so watch out for updates.

Magnesium

Magnesium is critical for bone development, muscle formation, immunity, heart health & deficiency can be common during pregnancy.

The most complained about symptom is usually leg cramps and may be related to a magnesium deficiency.

Look out for magnesium in your prenatal supplement, ideally from magnesium glycinate as this is easier for the body to utilise, and also easier on the stomach.

Finding the right magnesium supplement for you to take is important.

Magnesium can be found in many food sources including nuts, seeds, green veggies, avocados.





Iron

1 Low iron levels is one of the most common deficiencies seen during pregnancy and postpartum. Most women end up taking an iron supplement, especially during the third trimester.

You may want to consider a prenatal supplement without iron, and take it separately when, and if you need to for better absorption.

2 Iron is essential due to the increase in your blood volume in pregnancy.

3 It's best to get iron from your diet because this is better absorbed by the body, particularly heme iron found in meats. Supplement as necessary with particular forms that are known NOT to cause gastro upsets like constipation or reflux.

4 Your iron level is closely monitored throughout pregnancy, and your midwife or doctor will let you know if your levels are low enough to supplement.

If you do take iron supplements, always take them on a full stomach and with foods high in vitamin C to help absorption.

Some women report feeling wide awake if they take iron supplements too close to bedtime, so if this is you, take them earlier in the day.

Vitamin D3

1

Vitamin D deficiency is very common in pregnancy varies considerably. What makes this one unique, is it's the only vitamin that your body can make from sun exposure.

2

Aside from pregnancy complications with low levels of vitamin D, this vitamin is also crucial for your baby's development.

3

I recommend that you chat with your healthcare provider to check your blood levels to figure out the amount of vitamin D3 you need to supplement.

4

A deficiency in vitamin D increases the risk of pre-eclampsia, gestational diabetes, and low birth weight .

5

The amount to supplement with depends on your individual needs. Always look for D3 when supplementing.

Foods to include are eggs, butter, fortified milk products, fish such as sardines, salmon and seafood.





These were just a few **KEY** nutrients to check for in your prenatal supplement.

Others include -

- Vitamin A
- Calcium
- Iodine
- Zinc
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin K2
- Selenium

This is not an exhaustive list and finding the **RIGHT** prenatal for **YOU** all depends on your dietary intake.

Prenatal Supplement

A prenatal supplement during pregnancy is essential, but it's important to understand that choosing the right one isn't a "one size fits all" scenario.

Each woman's body and nutritional needs are unique, and a prenatal supplement should cater to these individual requirements.

Choosing the “right” prenatal supplement can do more than provide necessary nutrients—it can also help to limit or alleviate common pregnancy symptoms like morning sickness, reflux, and constipation.

Therefore, personalising prenatal supplements based on specific needs can truly enhance your pregnancy experience, ensuring optimal health for both you and your baby.

