

Taking Multivitamins Around Time of Conception May Lead to a Better Pregnancy Outcome

(July 2011)



A recent study from Denmark suggests that taking multivitamins around the time of conception may decrease the risk of preterm birth (**PTB**) or small-for-gestational age (**SGA**) babies. **Multivitamins** are manufactured supplements that may contain a wide range of vitamins (including folate) and minerals. A **prenatal vitamin** is a specially formulated multivitamin designed to meet the need of pregnant and nursing mothers. These vitamins make up for any nutritional deficiencies in your diet during your pregnancy. It's well known that periconceptional folate supplementation has a strong protective effect against neural tube defects like spina bifida.

In a recent study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, researchers collected data on multivitamin use in 35,897 women from the Danish National Birth Cohort. Women reported frequency and timing of multivitamin use before pregnancy and during a 12 week period before delivery. Study authors then analyzed this data for any association with preterm and SGA births.

The researchers found that women who regularly took multivitamins before and during pregnancy had a lower incidence of PTB and SGA than those who did not. Specifically, an association was found between periconceptional multivitamin use and PTBs which was related to pre-pregnancy overweight status, however the interaction was not significant. It was found in non-overweight women that regular pre-conception and post-conception multivitamin use was associated with a decreased risk for PTB and preterm labor. However, these associations were *not* found to be present in overweight women.

While promising, more research is needed in this area. Remember that multivitamins do not take the place of eating nutritiously, but it can balance the scales in your favor, and your baby's too. These researchers have said "multivitamin use around the time of conception could be a safe and simple strategy to improve pregnancy outcomes, similar to folate supplementation".

Gregory H. Corsan, MD