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## Nutritional support during pregnancy: A gynaecologist's perspective

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Proper nutrition is the cornerstone of a healthy pregnancy. From the first trimester to delivery, what a mother eats plays a vital role in the development of the baby and her overall well-being. Here's a gynaecologist's take on the essential nutritional needs during pregnancy:

**Focus on folic acid:** Crucial in the first trimester, folic acid prevents neural tube defects and supports the formation of the brain and spinal cord. Green leafy vegetables, beans, and cereals are excellent sources.

**Prioritise protein for growth:** Protein is the building block for the baby's cells, muscles, and tissues. Incorporate lean meats, eggs, dairy products, and plant-based proteins like lentils and tofu to meet daily requirements.

**Calcium for strong bones and teeth:** The baby's skeletal development relies on adequate calcium intake by the mother. Gynaecologists recommend dairy products, fortified plant-based milk, almonds, and leafy green vegetables to maintain bone health for both the mother and baby.

**Iron to combat fatigue and support oxygen supply:** Iron-rich foods like lean meats,

spinach, and legumes prevent anaemia and support the increased blood volume needed during pregnancy. Pair with vitamin C-rich foods to enhance absorption.

**Hydration is the key:** Ample water intake helps in digestion, nutrient absorption, and maintaining amniotic fluid levels. Aim for at least 8-10 glasses of water a day.

**Healthy fats for brain development:** Omega-3 fatty acids found in fish, walnuts and flaxseeds are essential for the baby's brain and eye development. They also reduce the risk of preterm labour.

**Micronutrients & vitamins:** Vitamins like B12, D and iodine are crucial for energy, bone health and immunity. Regular prenatal supplements, as prescribed by your gynaecologist, ensure these needs are met.

**Mind the cravings, but keep them balanced:** Indulging cravings in moderation is fine, but prioritise nutrient-dense snacks like fruits, nuts and whole grains.

A balanced diet, exercise and meditation, along with regular prenatal counselling and check-ups, form the cornerstone of a healthy pregnancy for both mother and baby.

Abha Surgy Centre

