

memo

DATE: October 7, 2020
TO: WIC Coordinators and LA Staff
FROM: Carole Kelnhofer, Training Coordinator
SUBJECT: Gummy Prenatal Vitamins - Topic of the Month

During pregnancy, the daily recommended nutrient intake for women increases. Many women may find it difficult to eat enough to meet that growing need. Prenatal vitamins during pregnancy are meant to supplement a healthy dietary intake. If over-the-counter or prescribed prenatal pills are not well tolerated, some women may choose gummy prenatal vitamins.

Gummy prenatal vitamins can provide many, but not all, of the extra vitamins and minerals needed during pregnancy. While most gummy prenatal vitamins contain the recommended amounts of folic acid and iodine required for pregnancy, there is none that have added iron. Lack of iron during pregnancy can create a risk of iron deficiency anemia. Additionally, the nutrients in the gummy vitamins may come from artificial sources, which can affect their bioavailability. These sweeter vitamins also have added sugars; it may be tempting to eat one too many. Taking more than the recommended amount of vitamins can create a risk for toxicity of [fat soluble vitamins](#) (such as vitamin A).





Not all vitamin supplements are created equal; it is important to choose one that has been tested for safety and quality. The United States Food and Drug Administration ([FDA: Dietary Supplements](#)) does not have the authority to review dietary supplements for safety and effectiveness prior to marketing of the product. However, the manufacturer is required to ensure that safety and labeling meet requirements that the FDA follow under the [Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994](#) (DSHEA).

Choosing a Prenatal Vitamin

- Ask the obstetric care provider: to prescribe or recommend a prenatal vitamin.
- Read the label: look for a vitamin that contains:
 - Iron: 27 mg (100% DV)
 - Iodine: 150 mcg (100% DV)
 - Folic acid: 400 mcg (100% DV)
 - Vitamin B12 (recommended for vegans, vegetarians, and those who have had certain bariatric surgeries)
- Ask the pharmacist: before purchasing an OTC prenatal vitamin, ask which product(s) have been tested for safety and quality.
- Be aware: natural does not always mean safe!

- Take the correct amount: be sure to take only the prescribed or recommended amount per serving each day.

A Comparison of Prenatal Vitamins

| Prenatal Vitamin | Tablets/Gelcaps/Gummies | Comparing Vitamin Content |
|--|---|---|
| Rainbow Light: Prenatal One (tablets) (serving size 1 tablet) |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Iron (100% DV) ✓ Iodine (100% DV) ✓ Folic acid (100% DV) *Tablet does NOT contain gelatin. |
| Equate: Daily Prenatal (tablets and softgels) (serving size 1 tablet + 1 softgel) |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Iron (156% DV) ✓ Iodine (100% DV) ✓ Folic acid (100% DV) *Liquid gel does contain gelatin. *Tablet does NOT contain gelatin. |
| Vitafusion Prenatal Gummy Vitamin (serving size 2 gummies) |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iron (none) ✓ Iodine (76% DV) ✓ Folic acid (100% DV) *Gummy does contain gelatin. |
| SmartyPants Prenatal Gummy Vitamin (serving size 4 gummies) |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iron (none) ✓ Iodine (100% DV) ✓ Folic acid (100% DV) *Gummy does NOT contain gelatin. |

**Minnesota Department of Health WIC program does not endorse nor promote any particular brand of prenatal vitamins.*

WIC's Role

WIC is a health and nutrition program; it is our job to provide accurate information and support the informed decision that participants make. Begin with offering the participant evidence-based education. Participants should be made aware of the recommendations for supplementation, but it is not our role to prescribe or endorse a particular product. We can discuss concerns, offer suggestions for healthy eating, offer tips to alleviate nausea, and advise to consult with their health care provider for specific vitamin recommendations.

The increased need for specific vitamins and minerals during pregnancy can help to ensure a healthy outcome for mom and baby. When asking the participant if their prenatal contains iron, iodine, and folic acid, it is important to encourage them to discuss these nutrients with their health care provider. Staff should also be aware of the risks associated with lack of intake of these three important nutrients. For example, iron deficiency anemia can cause health

problems during and after pregnancy. The impact deficiencies have on pregnant woman can be long lasting and persist throughout subsequent pregnancies.

For more information on the effects of deficiencies in iron, iodine, and folic acid:

- [Anemia in Women participating in the Minnesota WIC Program \(WMV\)](#) and [Iron Deficiency Anemia- Topic of the Month](#) (December 14, 2016).
- [Iodine Supplementation for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women](#).
- [Minnesota's Folic Acid Guidelines for the Prevention of Neural Tube Defects \(NTDs\)](#).

It may be important to discuss tips for alleviating nausea during pregnancy. This can be especially important when it comes to tolerating prenatal vitamin intake. Pregnant women may have trouble early on in pregnancy and we can offer suggestions that may help. Make a note; this is a topic that should be reassessed at future nutrition education contacts. Participants may find that as the pregnancy progresses they are better able to tolerate taking the vitamin as intended.

Lastly, explore whether cost may be a barrier to taking the prenatal vitamin. WIC can offer resources such as applying for medical assistance or checking with local food shelves. Remind participants to ask their health care provider for a prescription. Medical assistance will cover the cost of prenatal vitamins and most private insurances will pay for all or part of the cost.

Nutrition during Pregnancy

- Eat a balanced diet with a variety of healthy, nutrient rich foods.
- Take prenatal vitamins every day in the morning or at night;
 - with a meal or snack may ease nausea associated with intake.
 - trying half in the morning and half at night may offer relief.
- Get extra nutrients and calories from lean proteins, low-fat dairy products, fruits and vegetables, and whole grain breads or cereals.
- Drink plenty of water and other non-caffeinated beverages throughout the day.

For a review of prenatal vitamin recommendations and requirements please see [Prenatal Vitamins- Topic of the Month](#) (January 18, 2017).

Resources for Families

- Nutrition Education Cards: [Prenatal Vitamins](#), [Eating Well During Pregnancy](#), [Eating More: Iron](#), [Nausea & Vomiting during Pregnancy](#).
- [Wichealth.org](#): Preparing for a Healthy Pregnancy.

Continue to send any topic suggestions or feedback to carole.kelnhofer@state.mn.us or your State WIC Consultant.

References- Complete list of Hyperlinks

[Iron Deficiency Anemia in Women and Children Module](#)
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/training/cfh/wic/nutrition/modules/mod5irondef/index.html>)

[FDA: Dietary Supplements](https://www.fda.gov/food/dietary-supplements) (<https://www.fda.gov/food/dietary-supplements>)

[Fat Soluble Vitamins](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK234920/) (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK234920/>)

[National Institute of Health: Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994](https://ods.od.nih.gov/About/DSHEA_Wording.aspx)
(https://ods.od.nih.gov/About/DSHEA_Wording.aspx)

[Prenatal Vitamins](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/pgprenatalvits.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/pgprenatalvits.pdf>)

[Eating Well During Pregnancy](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/pgeatwell.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/pgeatwell.pdf>)

[Eat More: Iron](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/geniron.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/geniron.pdf>)

[Nausea & Vomiting during Pregnancy](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/pgnausea.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/english/pgnausea.pdf>)

[Wichealth.org](https://www.wichealth.org/) (<https://www.wichealth.org/>)

[Anemia in Women participating in the Minnesota WIC Program \(WMV\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/training/cfh/wic/nutrition/nepresources/anemia/video.wmv)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/training/cfh/wic/nutrition/nepresources/anemia/video.wmv>)

[Iron Deficiency Anemia- Topic of the Month](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/wedupdate/moyr/2016/topic/1214anemia.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/wedupdate/moyr/2016/topic/1214anemia.pdf>)

[Iodine Supplementation for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/nutrition/iodine/index.html)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/nutrition/iodine/index.html>)

[Minnesota's Folic Acid Guidelines for the Prevention of Neural Tube Defects \(NTDs\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/childreneyouth/cyshn/folic.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/childreneyouth/cyshn/folic.pdf>)

[Prenatal Vitamins- Topic of the Month](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/wedupdate/moyr/2017/01jan/18/vitamins.pdf)

(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/wedupdate/moyr/2017/01jan/18/vitamins.pdf>)

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program, 85 E 7th Place, PO BOX 64882, ST PAUL MN 55164-0882; 651-201-4444, wic.health@state.mn.us, www.health.state.mn.us; to obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-4444