

Woman

WHAT TO EAT WHILE YOU'RE PREGNANT

HERE are our dietary tips for mums-to-be who want to remain in optimal health during their pregnancy and give their child the best support they can.

Protein
Eat a portion of meat, fish or eggs with every meal.

HEALTH AND FITNESS
by Craig Maddocks and Natasha Gant

Ensure you are having the best quality, preferably organic.

Eggs
Sadly, eggs have had a bad

Getting concerned about childbirth? Try hypnobirthing

How classes can help take the fear away from having a baby

By VANESSA MOON
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IN the words of one dad-to-be: "I would have been petrified for Clare if we had not got the other viewpoint."

The "other viewpoint" was hypnobirthing, and Adam Edwardson's terror was a result of ante-natal classes he and wife Clare attended as they prepared for the birth of their first child.

"I felt the ante-natal classes reinforced the message childbirth is all about pain," says Adam, 30.

"When women have babies, people expect them to go to hospital. We expect there to be pain because everyone says so. It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

"At hypnobirthing classes, we learned mother nature designed women perfectly to have babies without it being a terrible, painful, stressful experience for mother or baby."

The couple, of Rainsborowe Road, Colchester, are expecting their baby any day now and have been practicing breathing and relaxation techniques learned during a hypnobirthing course in Colchester.

Far from Paul McKenna popping in to put people in a trance and make them believe or do something they would not usually do, Alison Bird says hypnobirthing aims to strip away our preconceptions about childbirth.

The clinical hypnotherapist said during the course, participants learn how the body works during labour, what causes the pain and how to relax to prevent it.

Alison is keen to stress that it is far from the "hippy, alternative therapy" some people may think it is.

"It is a complementary therapy designed to work with your body and your mind, alongside drugs if they are necessary and caesarian sections," says Alison, who runs her practice from George Williams Way, Colchester.

She helps about 40 couples a year learn about hypnobirthing, which

HOW IT WORKS...

HYPNOBIRTHING works by stripping away the idea that labour and childbirth is painful.

Using breathing and relaxation techniques, aided by a CD and a book, the mum-to-be and her birthing partner learn about how the body works during labour, the muscles used and why there may be pain.

It believes that by being scared of going through labour,

women will automatically become stressed and tense their muscles, which leads to pain. By learning to allow muscles to relax and do their job, endorphins - or natural anaesthetics - are released.

Women using hypnobirthing techniques are not in a trance and they can walk around, eat, talk, just as they would if they were not using the techniques.

forms just one part of her business. She also helps people to conquer fear, with weight control and to quit smoking.

"Pain is there to tell you something is wrong and in recent years what has been wrong with labour is the fear of it. It is not weird, new age stuff, it's old age wisdom," explains Alison.

Growing in popularity, hypnobirthing is based on the philosophy of a British obstetrician, Grantly Dick-Reed, founder of the National (then Natural) Childbirth Trust, who discovered women around the world were not receiving pain relief during labour because there was no pain, and he wanted to know why.

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Practicing in the Twenties, his views were controversial, but he slowly learned foreign women were also not aware labour was supposed to be painful, as it was widely believed in England.

Instead, they allowed their body to do what it was naturally supposed to do and he believed that without the fear, there was no tension of the mus-

cles, and therefore no pain, making childbirth a more enjoyable, stress-free experience.

His book, *Childbirth Without Fear*, and his methods, did not become popular until near his death in the Fifties and went on to be the inspiration behind hypnobirthing, a practice which began in America and filtered to the UK 20 years later.

Alison came across the idea while she was working in a merchant bank in London. She fell pregnant ten years ago and echoed Adam's thoughts that ante-natal classes she attended "scared the life out of me".

She told her husband she did not want any pain relief, "not because I was being new age or anything, but because I didn't want to give my baby any drugs," she says.

He suggested hypnosis. "I thought he was mad," she says.

"He had used it to quit smoking, so I went to see a woman for three sessions and it seemed to work."

"I had gas and air because it was on offer and I wasn't in any pain. It also reduced my stress at work because it is all about relaxation and learning to cope with stress."

Soon afterwards she decided to train as a hypnotherapist in South-end, then came across hypnobirthing.

Since qualifying, she has given talks to midwives and said that while hypnobirthing is all about natural childbirth and working with the body, rather than against it, it does not

WEDDING FAIR
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10am - 4pm
CHARTER HALL COLCHESTER LEISURE WORLD
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to book your stand or for further details

rap in recent years, but hunter gatherers literally lived on them. Fresh, organic eggs are a wonderful source of good cholesterol, fat, vitamins, protein, calcium and iron.

Eggs must be well cooked. Avoid soft-boiled or sunny-side servings.

Cod liver oil
Cod liver oil is a great source of Vitamin A.

Traditional diets delivered more than ten times the Vitamin A than the standard modern diet.

Vitamin D, essential for bone growth, as well as the

brain and nervous system of you and baby, is also found in cod liver oil.

We recommend one teaspoon of this a day.

Good quality fats

Eating healthy fats, like coconut oil, olive oil, avocado and good quality but-

ter, will help stop cravings for sweet foods.

Sugar cravings are renowned for plaguing pregnant women. This is usually because they are protein deficient.

We would also recommend avoiding refined sugar.



■ Success - Alison Bird, centre, with Natasha Vernon, husband, James and baby Jessica *Picture: NIGEL BROWN UZE3C*

preach against women who choose, or need, to take pain relief.

One of her more recent success stories was Colchester Heart FM presenter Natasha Vernon, who gave birth to Jessica in March this year.

The former breakfast show DJ admitted she is a "wimp" when it came to pain and had always struggled with needles.

But she claims the hypnobirthing classes helped her regain control of potentially painful situations, including childbirth.

Natasha, 30, says: "I went into labour in the morning, went and had Sunday lunch and had contractions, all the way through dinner.

"I went to Colchester Hospital at 7.30pm and didn't even take any gas and air until 3am. Every time I had a surge, I would not panic and just think it was perfectly normal, and it would relax me."

In the end Natasha, of Leavenheath,

did need an epidural, but only as a result of complications when the umbilical cord became wrapped around Jessica's neck twice, sending Natasha's blood pressure through the roof.

Her husband, James, 32, a firefighter in Nayland, says: "The hospital respected our decision to do the hypnobirthing. We only had one midwife in the room with us and she let us get on with it.

"Dads are usually on the sidelines during labour, and worrying about their partner in pain, but I was really involved all the way through this."

COVER PASTY PINS

WITH the summer weather being a bit of a sun anti-climax, we're all more than ready to start covering up our pasty pins again.

Thankfully, designer Henry Holland is brightening up our hosiery options with his new House of Holland collection for Pretty Polly.

Already spotted on the likes of Agyness Deyn and Pixie Geldof, right, you'll find tights in quirky prints and vibrant colours, with each pair priced £10.

Visit www.prettypolly.co.uk for stockists.

