

Beautiful Babies

nutrition for fertility, pregnancy, breastfeeding, & baby's first foods

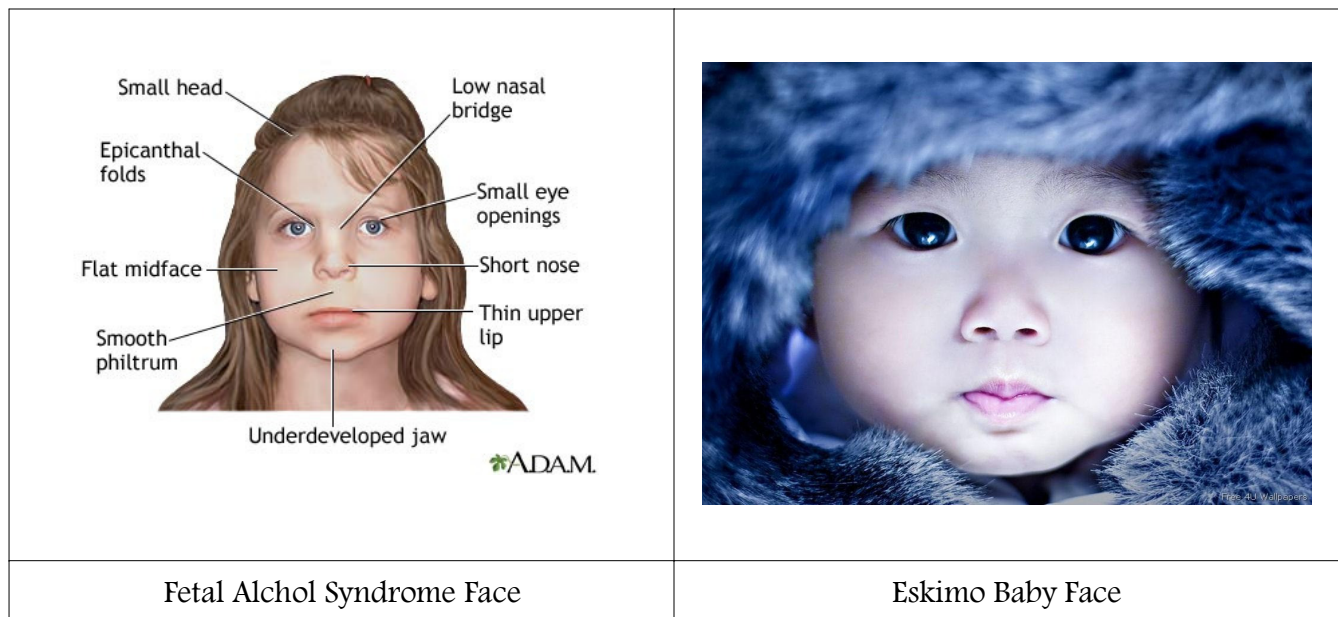
Lesson 1: Why Nutrition Matters

With every pregnancy, there's a standard bit of advice for what mothers-to-be should put in their bodies. Take prenatal vitamins. Avoid caffeine. Try not to eat too much junk. Avoid raw cheeses and cold lunch meats. Don't drink alcohol.

Everyone knows nutrition matters.

But these bits of advice all tell us how to avoid devastating deformities and abnormalities. The prenatal vitamins are so that your baby doesn't get rickets or spina bifida. Avoiding alcohol keeps your baby's appearance and development normal so that she doesn't get fetal alcohol syndrome. Avoiding raw cheeses and cold lunch meats keep you from contracting listeria and the host of potentially deadly problems that can go with it if you're pregnant.

Is it such a stretch to imagine that nutrition can do more than just prevent these tragedies? If really poor nutrition can cause the facial abnormalities associated with fetal alcohol syndrome, is it such a stretch to imagine that really excellent nutrition can cause perfectly proportioned faces?



Have you ever stopped to think about what a perfectly proportioned face could mean for your baby?

Facial Structure	Implications
High cheekbones, wide dental arches	Plenty of room for all teeth. Everything grows in straight with no crowding. No need for braces!
Spacious sinus cavity	Plenty of room for drainage down the eustachian tube. No ear infections, sinus infections, and fewer colds with less congestion!
Well-spaced eyes	Eyes grow to proper shape because they have plenty of room. This means no near or far sightedness (no need for glasses!).

This is just the tip of the iceberg. Nutrition has far reaching implications for fertility, your pregnancy & birth experiences, and your child's long-term health.

Watch Video 1.1 – Nutrition Matters

Please take a moment to watch the first video in this week's lesson. Then, answer the following questions.

1) What is the Fetal Origins Hypothesis?

2) Name two ways a low-fat diet adversely affects fertility.

3) How do the Maasai people of Africa prepare a couple for marriage?

Watch Video 1.2 – Avoiding Nutritionism

While it's true that nutrition matters, it's also imperative that we don't fall into the trap of nutritionism. Please watch the second video in this week's lesson and answer the questions below.

1) What is nutritionism?

2) When the public focuses on nutritionism, who benefits? How? Why? Who suffers? How? Why?

3) Do you think fake foods can be made better than the foods they imitate? Why? Why not?

Watch Video 1.3 – What Traditional Food Cultures Can Teach Us

In this e-course, we'll be looking to the diets of traditional cultures for guidance. That's because, as discussed in the second video, nutrition science is a young science. Nutrition scientists often give us contradictory advice and fail to see the big picture. That's not to say there's no place for science, but simply that there's an even bigger place for the weight of history. After all, women have been reproducing for anywhere between 7,000 and 77,000 generations on this planet (depending on whose science you believe). Could we have gotten this far if there was something intrinsically wrong with the way we historically ate? Please watch the third video in this week's lesson and answer the questions below.

1) Do you think it's possible in our day and age to eat a diet like traditional cultures? Why? Why not?

2) Think about everything you eat & drink in a typical day. Now, compare this to the common principles of traditional diets found in Sally Fallon Morell's segment of the video above as your guide. How does your diet measure up? What sorts of things are you resolved to improve, if any?

Read Handout 1.1 – Comparing Diets: A Picture's Worth A Thousand Words

The differences between those raised eating industrial food diets and those raised eating a traditional food diet are astounding. According to the anthropological surveys of Dr. Weston A. Price, those who adhered to traditional food diets were practically disease-free – and I'm not just talking about susceptibility to things like the cold or flu. They were a heartier folk without cancer, heart disease, tuberculosis, or diabetes. Read this week's handout and record your notes and observations below.

Read This Week's Birth Story

In this week's story, you'll read the tale of three different births (of four children) with the same mother. In the first birth, the mother followed standard nutritional and medical advice, only to have a relatively hard and complicated birth. In her subsequent births 15 years later (when she should have been nearing infertility and placed in much higher risk categories for pregnancy and birth complications), the mother ate a nutrient-rich diet modeled on those of traditional food cultures. Her later pregnancy and birth experiences couldn't have been more peaceful or uncomplicated, despite the fact that she home-birthed twins (with no stretch marks)! Read this week's birth story, and record your notes, observations, and feelings below.

Notes & Questions

As you watch the videos or go through the workbook, record any notes or questions here. Then, if at the end of the lesson your questions still aren't answered, return to the online class to ask them there.

Bringing It Home

Hopefully, this lesson has helped you grasp how important nutrition is. You've also learned about the quandary of nutritionism and what traditional food cultures can teach us. Now, let's put some of this new found discernment into practice.

Find 5 advertisements for food (magazines, newspapers, and even television commercials count)!
First, ask yourself this: are the foods Real or Fake? What makes you think so?

Now, examine how the foods are marketed. Are the ads subtly shaped by nutritionism? If yes, do you believe their health claims? Why or why not?