How Proper Nutrition Enhances Your Conception Chances Transcript

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Introduction and guest welcome

Hey. Welcome to the Beyond Infertility Summit. My guest today is Dora Toma. She is a Certified Functional Medicine Health Coach and she specializes in women's health and fertility.

We have shared a lot of conversations together and I absolutely adore the grounded way in which she approaches nutrition and how the food that we eat is going to impact our fertility.

She started out in this with her own diagnosis of PCOS and Hashimoto's, and she got through it through supporting her body to optimal nutrition and optimal fertility.

So she's going to share all of her wisdom so that you can get pregnant and stay pregnant. Thank you for joining us today and I look forward to seeing you soon.

Thank you so much for being with us on the Beyond Infertility Summit, Dora. Welcome. I'm so excited to talk to you all about nutrition and laying the foundation then the honestly like the big foundational bricks of fertility journey.

Yes. Thank you so much for inviting me. Dr. Aumatma. And it's a great pleasure. And I always love chatting with you and the the amount of information that you're going to share with the audience is going to be amazing because you have only amazing practitioners in here.

So I am excited to be part of that. Thank you. Thank you. Yes, I'm so excited. And like we have some of the best leading experts in the field of fertility and health and wellness.

So I'm just so excited and I feel like you just bring such a unique presence to the conversation and just like awesome information. So I'm glad to have you here.

Nutrition as the foundation of fertility

Thank you so much. Yay. Okay. So let's start with talking about the basics. How do we look at nutrition? And when it comes to a couple that's maybe trying to get pregnant, they're just starting out on their journey.

What should they be paying attention to? Yeah, I mean, when we're talking about nutrition is just yeah, we're eating because we don't want to starve. Right? It's just I have to do something.

I need to just eat as part of the day. Nutrition is more than that in a functional medicine. What I've been trained and we are taught that food is information and it is that information that tells the body what to do and what it needs to do in order to function optimally.

Right. And I just keep you keep the person, the body alive, but actually do every single function the most optimally possible. And also food is energy.

It gives the it it's it gives basically the fuel of every single little cell all the way to the mitochondria. And without that fuel, the body will not be able to function.

We are just like a machine. If it doesn't have gas, it's just not going to work. And so this connection we we always gather around the table with family.

Now, with so many social events, we go to parties and go on and go on with friends or family members. We go on vacation, especially couples. They are social couples, especially when they're trying to visit their social.

They go out with friends and barbeque because it's summer or winter, it's Thanksgiving and it's Christmas. There's always something going on and we gather together and it's what brings everybody together.

And we can look at our ancestors and you know, people are so far along, everybody would gather, would hunt, would gather their food and put it all together in the middle and everybody would eat.

So food is really important, is not just, yeah, I have to I have the slate and I just have to put in my my mouth just not to be hungry. So it is really important.

But at the same time it's important what we put it in our body and the quality and the amount of nutrients that we are getting. It's also not about the calories per say.

And so I and I'm on it is child and I grew up with the counting calories so the type of generation and and a lot of women that I'm working with there are in the same age group in their thirties or even late twenties.

So this mentality of like how many calories I should I should not be eating a lot because I don't want to gain weight. I, I want to look a certain way.

Even I, when I was going in my fertility journey or even before I wanted to become pregnant, I was afraid and want to gain weight during pregnancy. And what can I do?

I want to have to make sure that I'm not eating too much and that shoots our entire system in the blood. One, the hormones will be affected and then you treat nutrients and our stress and our ability to handle stress, our ability to sleep and to regenerate and recover and for ourselves to rebuild and repair.

There are so many. Basically every single little system in our body depends on the foods that we were eating and the quality of it. Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

I think that food is just often so overlooked or we use it as a way to like control all what is happening in our bodies when in fact it's like I like to think of it as nourishment.

It's it you're nourishing your body, mind and spirit through the food. And like you said, the experience around the food. Right? If you're being super hyper vigilant about what's on your plate, then that's also like the energy that you're bringing into the body is that hyper vigilance that like, am I okay?

Is this okay? But we really want to get to the point where you're, like comfortable and confident in the food that you're consuming in the nourishment, I should say that you're getting.

Exactly. And any when people are going in any extreme either to hyper focus on really very healthy food and they do not want to exert in any sort of social events because not everybody will be following the same dietary rules that that person would go.

Balanced fertility-friendly eating patterns

So they end up either not going to the social events of isolation or they would end up not enjoying the event because people will have cakes or barbecues, will have bread, it will have whatever that oh my God, I don't want to touch that because it's not fertility friendly or it's not a fertility part.

It's not good for my fertility, which is absolutely not true. I I'm a big proponent of balance and there is no such food as there is no such thing as bad food or good food.

It's always in moderation. Obviously, we want to maximize and have 80% of the time those nutrient dense, high nutrient value foods. And, you know, the rest of the time with 20%, we can have ice cream, we have cakes, we can have chips and crackers and even even a glass of wine if it's possible.

I mean, obviously, everybody's different and situations change. All right. Individualized, but it's about moderation. I think trying to conceive. It's not a punishment.

It's not a sentence. It's not something. Oh, my God. I have to be isolating and avoiding everything. It's it should be part of this community type of experience.

So I'm curious for your thoughts on is there a optimal fertility diet? I think there is a there is definitely a base, a general recommendation. And then from there, each person has an individual needs.

When we're especially when we're talking about nutrient deficiencies or and they're necessary some improvements on foreign God specifically because the God is the center of our own health and the balance within the body.

And if the God is not healthy, God, it is troubling, it is damaged and the immune system is firing up and then everything else is just not okay and nutrients are not absorbed.

Well, yeah. So we definitely want to prioritize, right. The personalization and individualization, but there is a there a more of a fertility friendly diet.

And most of the studies that have been done on fertility and nutrition, they have concluded that a mediterranean style diet, it is the most friendly for fertility in both cases, male and female, if we want to just spread out and not.

But of Mediterranean style, that means having an abundance of vegetables and fruits and then having some dairy, having some greens, having healthy fats like olive oil and from olives and avocado and things like that.

Obviously a lease process is possible and then having nuts and seeds and animal products like source of protein plus legumes are also very important. And I just feel like at least what I'm looking at social media, I don't see a lot of people talking about legumes.

So if somebody is doesn't have any issues with legumes, then they're a great food and nutrient dense food that should not be left out. So making this arrangement and kind of close it out on the topic of protein, because I did mention we also want to diversify the protein.

Not always either. See one like eggs and chicken or poultry. I want to have a little have some fish and seafood. These are rich in omega three fatty acids and iodine and selenium and vitamin D.

And there are all those amazing nutrients that are important for our whole body, especially for to support fertility and equality and welcoming a new baby in the world.

Yeah. Yeah, I think almost like it's like the antithesis of limiting your diet, right? Like, I feel like fertility should really be an expansion. And unless there is a reason for it, like, maybe you're pre-diabetic and you need to lay off the sugar or you're have inflammation and you need to like customize your food sensitivities or whatever outside of those situations, really.

Like we're trying to get people to eat all of the food groups, which sounds crazy because like, shouldn't we be doing that already? But so often I feel like people are coming in on these like more restrictive diets, like Celia or Kito or whatever the latest thing is. And Maria, like, well, you're leaving out these major groups of foods that are contributing to good, healthy, healthy like body, but also healthy balance of hormones and limiting especially the carbs like the the anti carb craze.

Right. Like get rid of all the carbs because we hate carbs. And I'm like, no, we love carbs. Progesterone loves carbs. Correct. But and I do feel like I do sense it's this camp of low carb or there's the other camp more like paleo keto type of group.

And they're focusing a lot on that. So eating a lot of fat. But there are people who do tend to work better on a higher fat diet. Yeah, not everybody.

And most people need more protein than anything. So because if we eat enough protein, that will not have to cut as much carbohydrates anymore, we need carbohydrates.

You said progesterone needs carbohydrates, especially the complex carbohydrates, the sweet potato, the pumpkins, the root vegetables, and even the grains like whole grains.

And God, they are necessary. We need that. But also we should not be eating handfuls every single day of nuts and then all sorts of dressings and olive oil and a whole avocado.

And they are great, but not in a huge amount because they're so dense, nutrient dense and the body doesn't need that. Right. Come to as much free. I completely agree.

What are some of the things maybe you have like a top five things to focus on when a couple is trying to optimize their nutrition for fertility? Yes. The first thing I would look into is nutrient replenishment. So avoiding or minimizing nutrient neutral loss and depletion because the preconception that time is really the most important is test the stage for pregnancy and postpartum.

Many women who end up having a child and they have stories about had postpartum depression, postpartum anxiety and thyroiditis and all of these postpartum issues and complicated conditions.

Top fertility nutrition priorities

Do kind of start from the preconception side because if we are able to replenish those nutrient stores in time and effectively, then the body will be able to keep up with the demand will not have to take out from the storage, especially when it comes to protein, for example, protein because it needs to send out to the baby to make those cells and grow that human.

We are made by our flesh or skin and most of our body is made of fried chicken meat and what is it is a protein. So in order to make that little tiny human and we need to add more protein, we need to sustain that and we need to have all those all those vitamins that are fat soluble.

Right. We need to have enough of that have enough of those foods and the fat together. Also, we need to get our minerals and minerals are like spark plugs in our body.

So if we do not have the right amount of minerals in the pre-conception time, things can go wrong. And not only that, and it can perpetuate and cause issues throughout the pregnancy and postpartum, but it can cause hormonal imbalances, it can cause inflammation, it can cause issues with ovulation equality and aging, accelerated aging and so much more.

And I do tend to see a lot of women trying to grab supplement the supplements because it hurts. Zinc is good for our immune system and for equality. Melatonin one and the other one.

And vitamin D, let's take that one. And a vitamin C because it's an antioxidant and so many supplements. But then they don't focus on the actual food, which is superior from is what nature brought us and what nature is giving us food.

It is it comes in the form in the right amount, in the right balance, because all these nutrients do work synergistically together and they can be thrown off.

Yeah, absolutely. And I was just going to say, like, you gave the example of zinc and like kind of over supplementing zinc if you don't keep zinc. And so any imbalance with each other, you have more problems.

So yeah, it's really, it is like understanding the physiology really lends itself to the awareness of like, yeah, we do need kind of a balance. And some of these nutrients are regulating themselves based on their counterpart.

Mm hmm. Like having too much of one really throws that balance off and creates the downstream effects, hormone imbalance, air quality issues, like too many things that come out of the the imbalances.

Yeah. Another thing too is timing meals. We do not have one to especially. I keep seeing continuously that especially women there are skipping breakfast which is really the the worst thing you can do for your hormones when you're trying to conceive.

But whatever time, whether you're trying or not, it hurts your hormones. And you know, because that continues, they are skipping breakfast and they're having a lunch and a dinner, but then they're not eating too much because they don't want to feel too full.

They want to look at their make sure that they're having a nice figure and underweight gaining weight. They will under eat even more. And then not only just the you know, the the topic that I keep talking about is protein, but it's not just about that.

It's the actual amount of food and and also the amount of nutrients that we are getting. So having breakfast is really important and not skipping the other meals.

So having breakfast within the first hour after waking and then having lunch somewhere between three or 4 hours after that, you know, usually lunch is roughly 12:01 p.m., then having dinner around five or six seven depending.

Those are main meals. If somebody feels timely, they need to have snacks. That is perfectly fine. But then again, having the balance within the night, the macronutrients having enough protein, a lot of times I see people snacking on granola bars or fruits or just even snack foods that are not the best, or even cakes and cupcakes or muffins or and even though they're considered healthy, most of those packaged foods, they are more and higher rich in carbohydrates and very little in protein.

So we do want to maintain that consistency and this balance of protein, a good size of protein. So a good, good source of protein for general like especially in a snack would be Greek yogurt or cottage cheese or just a couple of slices of turkey, sliced turkey or smoked salmon, things like that that are super easy to grab.

They're not too messy and they're can even be packed if somebody goes to an office or things like that. And if they're their need for packaged stuff, there are those mistakes.

Or I'm a big fan of looping beans. Those are legumes, and they come in most of the grocery stores. Mostly I found I see them at Whole Foods, but they are in an individual package and just open the bag and just snag them.

And the mommas are amazing, right? Those are the soybeans buying them, especially like in the freezer section are the best are obviously organic and soy is the second most sprayed crop and genetically modified crops in the United States and I think in the entire world.

So we definitely want to get the organic version which is not expensive. It's easy to it's accessible and cooking them either in the in the microwave for a little bit to steam a little bit of salt.

Let's it munch on them or take the beans out of the pot and roast them a little bit to get the crunch in them. So there are ways to have healthier and smarter snacks and meals, but it is important to have also the timing right and not skip one or the other meal because the body wants predictability when the body will know, okay, wake up.

I know it's food time in a couple of hours. Another time to to eat. Then in the evening there is not a time to eat. The body will start feeling safe to say, okay, I think we're good to go to, to conceive and have a baby.

Yeah. Yeah, I agree. I think that that the regularity and knowing giving your body the information upfront of like this is the routine and you will always get food at that time.

You always get sleep at the time that we go to bed. Right? Like keeping that consistency is really helps reinforce

safety, which is so crucial for the the mind body to feel in time to reproduce for sure.

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. And the fourth one is lowering the stress that when we are in in a stressful state, especially when it comes to lunch, a lot of people work at the front of an eat in front of the computer.

Let me answer this email and just grab something in my mouth and the body will not receive that information that it's eating. It's time to eat. So the digestive juices and juice of enzymes, they will not be working optimally to break down those food.

Best foods for fertility

And so you might be eating the most amazing meal in a most balance and wonderful and all of great. But if your body doesn't receive that information, that it's time to eat, it's not going to digest the food well and it's going to come out the other side.

Or digestive issues will come like constipation, gas, bloating, feeling fatigued and all that stuff. Yeah. So lowering the stress, meaning sitting at a table where you're looking at the food, taking a couple of deep breaths before starting to eat so that start turning on that parasympathetic nervous system.

So telling the body, okay, it's time to rest and digest. That's why it's called a parasympathetic rest. And then just because that's when we turn on relaxation and we are allow the body to digest it and eating, chewing well the food and until it becomes a paste literally, and then swallowing and looking at the food, we're eating, smelling it and turning on all the senses.

This is when the body will will get as much and absorb all the nutrients that the body can get from that food. So it's not going to be, you know, the person will not have to do extra work.

Oh, my God, why am I eating so well? And I'm not seeing my levels of nutrients and not getting as high. So the last one, which is pretty much connected to the to this so I mentioned that earlier, the gut is where all the nutrients are getting absorbed.

If the gah is not healthy, then the nutrients will not be absorbed well because the body is too busy ad neutralizing the foreign invaders. So, you know, anything that is either large or molecules or bacterial fungi or viruses or toxins or anything like that, it goes and past that blood brain barrier, the immune system will start firing up and not that the body and the God will not be as busy, but let's say will not have the energy right to absorb those nutrients.

And because they doesn't have the nutrients, not have the ability to repair and use the nutrients that whatever has received. So it just kind of goes in a spiral.

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I think all of these are just so foundational to the fertility journey, so thank you for sharing those with us. I'm curious if you have any favorites or best foods for fertility?

What are your top three? Oh, wow. Top three foods, huh? I would say the first one, which I think I would say one of them would be fish. I think my favorite fish actually is our sardines.

These are small and so they have a low level of mercury. They're accessible, they're not expensive, and they're easy to consume. Most of them, you can buy them in our can so you can grab and go, it don't have to work too much.

Another one I think would be cottage cheese, another great source of protein. And I just simply love it. It's it's super easy again, super convenient.

He said three, right? Yeah. Okay. You have five to go for it. Like, how many have I made? Okay. So, and the other one would be beets. I eat beets. Yes, I do love them because they're the color.

They're red color and it's rich in antioxidants. It's good for the heart health, it's good for circulation, especially women that are trying to conceive and they need good flow and their your uterus and the Internet freedom also is very helpful for the liver.

It's one of the top liver loving foods. So it just it just awesome. I love it. And then I would say add to that the beets are high nitric oxide, which is yes.

Where the blood flow to the uterus which we need. It doesn't need. Cool. And then do you have any like anti fertility foods like oh please avoid these.

I would say I don't have a food that I would say please don't avoid or please avoid.

Foods and diets to approach carefully

I would say be mindful of those and in moderation and obviously assess what what is once your age or how long you've been trying, what are your challenges and just kind of a whole assessment.

But one of would be alcohol. And second one would be refined sugars. And maybe the third one, which can be actually the first one, will be foods that are sensitive to.

So I think that will be the first one. If somebody is sensitive to let's say whatever, let's say tomatoes, but you do not want to eat tomatoes, right?

If you're sensitive, you're allergic to fish, then obviously you do not want to eat that food. But yeah, those are those are definitely but not everybody will have all the food sensitivities and even we all have some sort of sensitivities.

Even the healthy person will have some sensitivity and we can develop that based on how often we are eating that food. And if you're eating every single day tomatoes and definitely you'll end up having a sort of sensitivity to that.

Would that be silent or will that have actual symptoms that all depend on each person? Mm hmm. Yeah, absolutely. Cool. I like that list. I think it's very manageable.

And then can we talk a little bit about some of the controversial foods? So that's gluten and dairy and even like we talked a little bit about it already, but the like controversial diets, which I think we could put into there as well. Yes.

Oh, well, I think, first of all, the controversial foods, most of them, they're gluten and dairy. We can always bring deli meats. We can you know, there are also in this category can go sugary sugar and refined sugar in general.

But first of all, when it comes to gluten, dairy, I really believe that it it's really case by case. I mentioned earlier, no food is bad food. It's about your ability, your body's ability to digest that.

And that is ability to do it health wise, especially the gut, but also the amount of those that are consumed. So with gluten, dairy, if somebody is celiac, if somebody has non gluten, a non-celiac gluten sensitivity or just has some gut issues and they have identified that gluten is causing issues.

So if somebody is has celiac, by all means, they have for their entire life need to avoid it and be very strict. But somebody would not see eye to eye sensitivity or sensitivity just general to any part of gluten, wheat, grains in general.

Then they should work with a practitioner to do elimination diet, work on healing the gut and then reintroduce and after the protocol, usually it's about a month long protocol and then reintroduce it and challenge to see if that if you can tolerate it back or you're having any symptoms.

If symptoms occur again, then obviously eliminate for a little bit longer, usually 3 to 6 months. But it's a healing journey. Sensitivities are not meant to stay forever.

It's just a sign. It's a way for the body to tell us that the gut is not doing great. And when it comes to dairy, they're either sensitivity to the proteins and dairy, which it's kind of it's the same is the same scenario with a gluten story or there is a lactose intolerance, which is genetic.

And, you know, if you have a lactose intolerance, obviously, do not you want to minimize your exposure to lactose? But there are there are foods that especially in the dairy category, for example, milk has the most lactose.

Lactose is the sugar in that dairy products. And the more is that dairy product is has been fermented, the less lactose it has. So milk has the most, yogurt has a little bit less.

Cottage cheese has even last less. Lactose in the in the cheese family. Soft cheeses have more lactose than hard cheeses like parmesan and cheddar cheese.

So if somebody is lactose intolerant, they could potentially at least test it out to see if they can tolerate hard cheeses. Obviously, we want to if somebody consumes dairy products and gluten products as well, they want to consume them organic, grass fed or that their dairy just to minimize the exposure of the other, you know, toxins and all that stuff and have the most nutrient dense products.

So it's not it's not black and white. It's very depends. I must say, the I don't the next one would be the sugar. Again, I think we need to have a more balanced idea of we can have if somebody likes pastries, they're oh, they haven't had pastry in a while and they go to their favorite bakery shop or it's a very nice organic bakery and they do French style little pastries and all that.

Enjoy it. Your body will be happy to receive it because you enjoy it and the sugar will not slow down the progress of your fertility journey. It's because you're only having a small piece.

If you're having an entire cake that's a different story or having a slice of cake every single day, or ice cream every single day or cookies or whatever they are.

Then obviously it's not helpful, but every so often on an occasion that I don't see it being something bad and if somebody is craving sweets, this is usually one of the reasons why people are tend to go towards that and questioning why am I craving sweets?

Is it because I didn't have enough protein in the previous meal? Is it because I'm too tired and my my adrenals are too low or my blood sugar is unstable and I'm having butcher issues and I need to work on or it's just that you can just switch in with something that is less.

It is less sweet, more natural, like a dark chocolate or with that has a little less sugar or a fruit or something that it's not a lot, it's not refined and things like that.

But again, it all depends on the person, but we have to look a little bit closer and not take it black or white. Yeah, yeah. I think that there is this like level of personalization that goes into really finding that optimal nourishment plan.

Mm hmm. Supporting the fertility journey. So definitely, I think you said earlier, like working with a practitioner that can really help you define what that is for you and like, you know, just guide you in a way that is not over restricting but is restricting the right things that are not working for your body really can go a long ways in supporting your fertility journey.

So thank you for sharing that message. Of course. My pleasure. So if people wanted to connect with you, where could they find you? Where is the best place?

The best place to see? My face is on Instagram and for my handle is @yourfertilitycoachdora. And I also have a website where they can see the entire package of it and my website is the same.

yourfertilitycoachdora.com. Okay, awesome. I love it. Thank you so much for being with us today. I appreciate your

time and all of the wisdom that you bring to this conversation so yeah, just glad to connect with you.

Thank you so much. It was a great pleasure and honor to be here with you. Yeah.