Introduction and Ellementu2019s Origin Story

Welcome, Doreen. It's so great to see you and have you here. I'm very excited to talk to you about prenatal supplements and what to look for, what to watch out for.

I know that we're going to have a really lovely conversation. And you are the founder of one of our sponsors. So can you just share, just like very briefly, what inspired you to start Ellement?

Absolutely. And thank you so much for having me here today. And, you know, you've really seen the journey from the beginning. Just to give a bit of background about myself, I started my career as an entrepreneur in the data and analytics space.

So I'm kind of a numbers nerd who also loves all things health and wellness. And my journey with Ellement, which I have. My box right here started after my first pregnancy, so I have an almost six year old and I experienced something that I think so many people have resonated with this question that when I went to my OB and said, you know, I'm thinking about getting pregnant, is there anything I should do differently, anything I should be thinking about?

My OB said Yes, you should start taking a prenatal supplement. And I was like, okay, sounds good. Um, which one should I take? And they were like, Well, they're all the same.

It doesn't matter. So I went to my local store and just like everyone started looking at the what felt like a hundred different bottles of different options.

And I started looking at the ingredient labels. And, you know, my doctor told me they're all the same. And yet I'm looking at the back of the bottle and I'm seeing different dosages, different form factors.

How do I know which version of iron I should be taking or should I have iodine or not? What form of vitamin A, etc.? All of these questions came to mind.

And so, you know, of course, we all, as consumers make whatever choice, informed choice we can in the moment. But after after my pregnancy, I sort of had this epiphany of like, wait, why can't we create a prenatal for each person, a truly personalized prenatal since every pregnancy is different, every body is different, every fertility journey is different.

And so coming from that data background, that founder background, I just figured if no one else is going to do it, I had to go out and do it. So I got to connect with amazing practitioners like you, like Dr.

Nathan Fox in New York, who's a maternal fetal medicine specialist. Dr. Shannon Clarke has been part of the journey at various stages early on in terms of helping with kind of identifying this idea of a more modular design for a prenatal.

So it's been incredible to have really a community of experts around this and then being able to take it from concept through having a physical product and amazing customer base and getting to share this this option out there with the world has been incredibly rewarding and, and, and just fills me with a lot of pride every day when we get to work and support all of Yeah.

And you have such a unique take.

When to Start Prenatal Supplements

So like I remember when we first talked and you were like, but I don't understand, like why if our nutritional needs are changing our prenatal, is it like, what's up with that?

It doesn't make sense. So there is like just so much knowledge and like uniqueness that you have approached this company with and the care that it has in cultivating the product.

So I'm very excited because it's it's a new take on prenatal, right? Prenatal is a great everyone knows are great, but not all of them are made equal.

And as you discovered quickly and most people don't ask that question, right, like most people are not turning the label around and being like, should I have this ingredient?

Is this the right one? Like, what's happening here? It's often just like, Oh, whatever the OB says or whatever the cheapest thing is on the market, or like whatever the one is that's being marketed to us the most times, instead of really looking for the unique needs that our bodies have.

So yeah, let's dive into prenatal of at what point in the journey of motherhood. Should Do we start taking a prenatal? So it's such a great question and what you'll hear now more practitioners lean into kind of traditional OB-GYNs is to say that you should start taking a prenatal at least three months before you are trying to conceive.

I think that now there's increasing evidence and with the different practitioners that I speak with to say that it really depends right? I mean, it depends on your context, maybe on your journey as well, depends on different maybe pharmaceutical products that you might have used in the past.

And so there's, you know, some people for whom they probably should be starting six months or a year in advance. But the kind of current, I would say, base case is to say you should start at least three months in advance.

And the reason for that is because of folic acid. Now we could probably have an entire session about folic acid, synthetic folic acid, methyl folate. The approach that Ellement has taken is to say, you know, yes, there's many different kinds of folate out there.

There's probably it's like over a dozen different forms of folate. There's methyl folate, there's the synthetic. There's all different things that you'll see.

The two most common, though, the one that's sort of been classically clinically studied, is the synthetic folic acid. That's the one that the the CDC recommends and ACOG.

And then there's also methyl folate, which has been shown to be more bioavailable, although has not been clinically studied to reduce the risk of neural tube defects.

So for Ellement, when we were making product development decisions, we just said, well, why can't we just include both or let people choose if they want to opt out of one or the other so we can take a very personalized approach.

But just so that people have the context, the primary reason that you might be recommended to start a prenatal early is because of folic acid. That said, there's a myriad of other ingredients that are really helpful and there's been increasing clinical evidence for this, really helpful for fertility inositol coQ10 these we also include I think they don't get enough attention oftentimes and certainly they don't get a lot of attention in a kind of classic off the shelf prenatal because it then is more expensive.

Right, to provide more of those ingredients. But that's something that we highly recommend for our our customers who are in the pre-conception stage. Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

So I know that folic acid gets very interesting. Like the controversy over it is just so big, so tell me. Oh, like, let's get a little more granular. What is the solution like?

How are people opting in to folic acid methyl tetrahydrate folate like how do they even have a choice? Yeah, such a great question.

How Ellement Personalizes Folate Choices

So the way that Ellement is designed and let me just do a little product to it here because I think it might be helpful that each of these boxes are packed for our customers every month.

So you get once you subscribe to Ellement, you get an onboarding form which defines sort of your first month of experience. But then from there, every three weeks we are sending you an automated email through our system to say, Hey, we'd love your feedback.

How was the last month? Have you had any bloodwork done that might indicate that you have some nutritional deficiency? Have you had some experience that maybe would necessitate a change to your box?

And inside there are these 28 packets and we can get more into also the AMPM design. There's, as you said, a lot of very intentional product decisions that make Ellement, I mean truly a superstar product compared to anything else in the market.

And just to share with the audience as well, this is truly a labor of love, right? I mean, it has been such a journey to get this to market. And I told myself, you know, I'm not in this because I just wanted to have a prenatal supplement brand, right?

Like I could do with myself in my time and life. But this is a product that truly needs to exist for a multitude of reasons. And we'll go into kind of some of the other reasons that people come to us for customization, but this very intentional kind of perforated design you can see here, it's also these are biodegradable packets, so there's low environmental impact and all of that.

But these are designed for me, right? And then for each of our customers and customized every single month. So back to your question about folic acid in the onboarding form, that is where our customers are designating to us.

Do they want kind of the standard design of capsule that we have for B vitamins, which includes both folic acid and methyl folate? Or do they want only metal folate or only folic acid that we provide all of those options?

Because inside here, these capsules are custom kitted for each of the customers. So we can easily, you know, design if someone's getting formula version A, B or C for their B vitamins.

Yeah. Yeah. Amazing. So we think in terms of ingredients or like what to look for on product labels, let's talk a little bit about how does an average woman who hopefully isn't pregnant yet but is likely to be pregnant in a few months, she goes to the store and she's like, How do I figure this out?

What? What should she be looking for? Well, the first thing that I think doesn't get enough attention is what should you be looking for that immediately?

You should put the product back on the shelf. And to me, there's two ingredients in particular that knowing what I know now, I would avoid because there's some evidence that it can be harmful.

The first one is titanium dioxide. It's actually at various stages been banned in the EU as we I think it's pretty general knowledge that, you know, in the United States we're not as regulated when it comes to ingredients.

The entire supplement category is not even regulated. So they can really put whatever they want in there. And that is a huge problem when you're seeing essentially gibberish on these labels, like titanium dioxide.

What is that? I didn't know what that was before, five years ago. So titanium dioxide is essentially a colorants. And so it doesn't serve any functional purpose.

It just makes your pills more pretty. Exactly. Much more white, which is not necessarily always prettier anyway, but whatever. Exactly. And so I think when people are aware of that, they're like, oh yeah, of course, why would I want this totally superfluous ingredient that is doing nothing for my health?

Oh, and it might be Gino toxic. So that's the first one that that I would run away from. The second one is silica and boron. I would put those kind of to kind of get at that next level.

If you can avoid it, it would be great. Both of those are ingredients that are very easy to get in the diet.

What to Avoid and What to Look For in Prenatals

There's not really any reason that one would need to supplement for it. And again, there's some evidence, especially with silica, I would say, compared to the two of those, that it's it just doesn't help, let's just say.

And so the that's the first thing that I would look for, knowing what I know now is what are the things that I absolutely should not have in my prenatal the next kind of set of decision is, is what should you have now?

I think what's interesting right, is that you could always cobble together your own supplement routine. Right? Like we know we have a lot of customers that come to us saying, I just discovered Ellement.

I've been dealing with having ten of these bottles because I am taking CoQ10 and I am taking Inositol, but it's in a different set of capsules than my standard baseline prenatal.

So that's why we try to make it all simple, right? We just put it all in these packets for you exactly what you need. So we include anywhere from 25 to 30 different ingredients, everything from Ion for people who need it and not everyone does.

That's I think a common problem with the preconception stage is that so many prenatal does include iron at 27 milligrams and then it causes digestive problems.

Constipation, hemorrhoids, it causes nausea. And people are wondering why they hate taking their prenatal as well. If it has iron in it, that might be the reason why.

So we're able to really customize that at a granular level. So iron is one of those things like if you are anemic, then yes, there's a reason then to include that, but otherwise might not be something that you need.

The B vitamins, as we talked about, really, really important. I would look for some of those are really kind of above and beyond nice to have that. There's increasingly a more clinical evidence that shows that they're very positive for pre-conception, but also trimester one, things like vitamin K2.

So having both K one and K2, many prenatal, we'll just have one or the other. But it'd be really great if you could find a prenatal that has both. Ellement has both.

Choline is one that has historically been a more expensive ingredient to include. And so most standard prenatal won't include choline or. Things like 50 milligrams of cocaine, which isn't going to do that much.

And we're at 300 and we have that's kind of our baseline. And we have some customers who by their third trimester are taking 900 milligrams a day of choline.

And we and then it kind of fills up by these like 300 milligram increments. But there was a fantastic new clinical study. I mean, this is much later stage than preconception, but a new clinical study, I think it was in 2021.

All of this, by the way, is linked on our website. And it showed that they followed a seven year study for cognitive development in kids and found that in utero, when moms were taking up to 900 milligrams of Colleen, there were much better outcomes for these babies.

So, you know, we're always adapting to the latest, but it's just great that we can be adaptive and you don't need those 900 milligrams in your first trimester.

But how great is it that by your third we can make those adjustments for you? So yeah, lots of ingredients to dove into, but I think the main takeaways are avoid titanium dioxide, look for, you know, those really great boosters like a K to a choline and omega threes.

That's another one that is not often included. So and again, lots of resources available on our website and of course through this amazing program. To every.

Country, we can reach out to our support team. They're more than happy to help on more individual cases as well in terms of various best practices. Awesome.

Are we? I feel like you covered it a bit. We talked about the ingredients avoid titanium dioxide, silica, boron, and then things to look for or would be nice to have around.

k1k2. Coley If you're in the pre-conception phase, the CoQ10 Inositol are really helpful ingredients to have. Is there anything else that would be nice to have?

Another one that is that we see a lot of customization around is calcium and magnesium. So to dove into that a bit more very important nutrients, ones that depending on people's diets, they may not get enough of.

So that is also something that starts to become very individualized. And the challenge with calcium and magnesium from a production perspective is they're very dense ingredients.

So it's a much bigger capsule typically or or you get a prenatal that, yes, it technically has calcium and magnesium, but it's at such a low dosage that it's not doing anything for you.

So that's another place where we see a lot of, again, customization or incremental action. We might start someone at like one capsule off of Cal Mag and then it'll go up to like three capsules by the time they're in their third trimester.

So that when it just, again, depends. But that's something that we certainly recommend to look for. And another one that I know you and I have had a lot of conversations around is iodine.

And so I guess just to cover off on that one, I mentioned earlier that there are some ingredients where people come to us because they really have a very hard time finding a product off the shelf that works for them.

And iodine is a big driver of this. There is a very large proportion of the population that has thyroid challenges. It can be a factor and of course I know, you know, way more about this than I do, but the thyroid can be a big factor in fertility.

And it's, I guess, my more layman's terms way of saying it. It can be kind of a game of of of whack a mole around. Like do you supplement, do you not?

It depends on the diet. Right. And that's where it's great to work with practitioners like you who can run the tests and do the analysis around what is best.

But then when it comes to taking a prenatal, the CDC recommend is that every prenatal needs to have a 150 micrograms, a iodine. So you all of these prenatal brands that are just off the shelf, including this 150.

But what if you have hypothyroidism or you have hypothyroid, autism, and your practitioner doesn't want you taking iodine in that way? You know, there's so many different cases.

And so we have separated out that capsule. So it becomes very easy for people if they're trying to troubleshoot

something with their thyroid or they're working with a practitioner who has told them, avoid iodine.

We make it very, very easy to customize around that in a way that's historically been quite difficult. So that's another ingredient that I would highlight.

Menu2019s Fertility Supplements and Support

Yeah, yeah, that one is a good one because it's very challenging to find iodine free prenatal and there are definite people that were like, Oh, it would be really nice for you to have iodine free products.

So yes, they always come back. They're like, Do you have a prenatal because we can find that. Yeah, yeah, exactly. Or you can make it iodine free for you.

Yeah. How about the men? Should men be taking anything during fertility, during pregnancy, even though they're not physically pregnant? How does that go?

Yeah, that's such a good question. So we hear this a lot from people who are trying to conceive around. Of course, it takes two, right? So it's always great to, you know, try to do what you can to optimize in every realm.

So the thing is that what we see for men is that the at least from a clinical evidence perspective, there's really a smaller list in our view, of ingredients that are that have been shown to be particularly helpful.

So the first two are in the B vitamin category. Folate and B12. B12 in particular can improve sperm count and generally all the B vitamins are you can consider the B vitamins like you're Energizer is right.

Like that's just a good category to make sure that you're covered in. Second is calcium, magnesium, and third are the omega threes, the DHEA and EPA followed.

Following that, we recommend COQ10 as well. And then we consider kind of bonus points for vitamin E and K2. So again, I'm sure that there is like additional ones, but if you had to pick a short list, I would say B vitamins, CalMag, omega 3s and CoQ10, we can skip that as well.

We do have some men who are using our product in tandem with their partners. But I would say, you know, most of the time we're focused on the on the person who's going to be carrying.

But yeah, there's definitely great clinical evidence around this. Right. And, you know, generally, we we see some men continuing to use their supplements even after conception because also it just needs to be said.

Right, that of course, you want to get your nutrients from food, but the classic American diet, anyway, is going to be deficient in a lot of ways for most people.

Yeah. And so that's where supplements come in as a supplement. That's really what it's there for is just to give you that extra boost. So yes, there's definitely great evidence for men to be using at least part of that ingredient list.

Mm hmm. Absolutely. And I know we've talked about this. I'll I like absolutely will diet across saying men should be paid attention to especially during that pre-conception period.

But the number honestly like what we see in our practice is the number of men that come back and are like, thank you so much, you just changed my life is really, really high.

And it's because like most of the time I feel like by the time they're in their thirties, forties, they're not feeling well. But until there's a significant illness or disease, no one's really talking to them about it.

So they're like, Well, I have this fatigue. I don't have a sex drive. I like don't feel so great, but I'm just like pushing through life and no one is supporting that, like, period of men when there's just there.

It's like not an overt issue, but it's also not like a great life. So and this is something, you know, this idea of like a low sex drive or, you know, just general kind of loss of vitality.

I think in the tips, all medical construct is it's almost it's like taboo and it's not necessarily viewed as a symptom of anything, but it it can be. And it's so we should empower the guys in our lives to take control of that.

Like if they're not feeling their optimal, like let's get them some support, whether that's in the form of supplements or otherwise. Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Absolutely.

Well, thank you so much for being here. How can people find Ellement?

Finding Ellement and Closing Remarks

Where where should they go? They should go to HelloEllement.com The spelling is e l l e m e n t. So it's like Ellement like periodic table of elements with an extra l in there for the female.

So HelloEllement.com. And as I mentioned, we have an amazing support team. It's just support@HelloEllement.com And if you have any questions about how this might work for you, what your packets would look like, we do, you know, again, coming from a data background, we do a lot of data analysis for our customers.

We can even look at a comparison of what you're taking today versus what it would look like with Ellement and where you're getting and hopefully and in 99% of cases, a more optimal dosage or set of form factors, you can look at our capsule guide as well for what this looks like on a capsule by capsule basis.

But we're here for everyone and just wishing everyone the best for their journey. Yeah, also. Well, thank you so much for being here. Thank you for supporting this fertility summit. And it's just been such a pleasure to watch this journey and watch Ellement grow and develop.

But it really started with you being the visionary and like creating this product for women that needed the support and didn't have it. So thank you. Yeah. Kudos to you for.

This and seeing it then in a bigger way than I did and just brainstorming with me in those early years. So thank you very, very much. Yeah. Awesome