

I have really come to know and respect alfalfa.

Feel free to use alfalfa throughout your pregnancy, but start it no later than 34 weeks, if you wish to pass on the Vitamin K to your baby. It also helps you build a nice strong amniotic sac because of the Vitamin C it contains, and is high in iron and calcium, without such interfering with each other.

My thanks to Lisa Goldstein, CPM, CNM, for her information which follows, starting after the testimonials.

Anne Frye's dosage (Understanding Diagnostic Tests in the Childbearing Year, 1997, p. 855) varies slightly than Lisa's. She recommends 3 grams of alfalfa tablet daily (1gram=15 grains). This would be more like building up to 6-8 capsules/day.

I do not recommend tablets, as they are further from the source (the alfalfa) as it is in nature, they can be manufactured with other 'fillers' to get them to stay in tablet form, and many moms report difficulty in digesting the tablets. Lisa states that the capsule is the best form; that the tea does not have as much alfalfa as the capsules have. Some of my mothers have better results with the tea. Either way, take into account the amount of alfalfa you ingested when making an informed decision about giving your baby Oral Vitamin K.

N.B: contraindications include if you are experiencing a UTI; the immediate postpartum, so as to prevent prolonging newborn jaundice and to prevent "over" engorgement; and anyone on blood thinners. The seeds (including alfalfa sprouts, the germinating form of the seed) have been linked to systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE). The capsules should be made with alfalfa LEAVES.

Testimonials from moms I serve or know well:

I took it as per your handout and had awesome iron counts. I also didn't have any trouble with it as far as diarrhea, etc. went, but I did start slowly and increased every couple of days. (I was less than regular - never bad - but I think the alfalfa helped me have a BM every day.) I was taking 6 a day by a couple weeks into it. I also stopped when she was born and started about a week later, but I still only take a couple a day now. I've had a great supply - I was VERY leaky at first, but finally, around 5 months, it seems to be much better. I don't know what else it's done for me, but as you know, I had a really awesome pregnancy and still feel great.
Brenda (8/2005)

I make it according to the wise woman herbal method, putting about an ounce of alfalfa to one quart of water and leaving it sealed in a jar to steep for four hours. I have a hard time fitting that in at night after work so I don't drink it that often, but when I am feeling low it definitely has me feeling better again fast. I try to do about two or three of those super strong cups in a day or so when I make it. I usually add the honey when it's finished.
Cinnamon (8/2005)

I drank tea with alfalfa in it throughout my second pregnancy. My iron levels have never been so high in my life (I'm usually borderline anaemic). My 28-week level was over 11, if I remember right, and during my first alfalfa-free pregnancy they were hovering around 9. Also, talk about not needing vitamin K at birth: Rachel's blood clotted so well we had trouble getting enough out of her heel for the PKU test.

I attributed my generally excellent sense of well-being during pregnancy in large part to that tea, which I drank about a quart of a day. I got some alfalfa capsules but had trouble swallowing them (I'm not into supplements anyway, I prefer teas).

I'm completely converted to alfalfa, and still drink alfalfa tea now (single ingredient, Alvita makes it).
Deirdre (7/2005)

I took alfalfa capsules and drank tea with alfalfa in it throughout my pregnancy. I am borderline anemic generally. I do not remember what my levels were with my first pregnancy but with this pregnancy they were very high. Unfortunately, I can't remember exactly what they were but my MW said they were the highest she had ever seen in a client. I, like Deirdre, also think they helped my energy levels and mood. I noticed a considerable difference especially in energy levels on days when I did not take the capsules or drink the tea. They also seemed to help with constipation (hemorrhoids) - again, I noticed a difference in BMs on days I did not get enough alfalfa. Keegan clotted well after birth and even two weeks later when we did his PKU (I still take alfalfa supplements). My midwife recommended taking alfalfa in the third trimester. However, because I had friends who were already pregnant and alfalfa converts, I began taking it early on and am very glad because I was able to enjoy the benefits almost my entire pregnancy. I read somewhere early on that alfalfa is a 'miracle plant'. While I'm not sure I would go that far, I do think it helped me have an extremely healthy pregnancy and birth.

Brook (7/2005)

I have never had a problem with anemia but I did want the benefits of herbs without having to swallow a zillion capsules a day so I adapted an herbal tea recipe from Aviva Jill Romm's book on natural pregnancy. I bought organic herbs in bulk through www.mountainroseherbs.com - much cheaper and fresher than tea bags, capsules, or even the bulk bins at health food stores.

Here's the recipe as adapted:

50 grams red raspberry leaf
50 grams nettle
50 grams alfalfa
25 grams oatstraw
15 grams rosehips
15 grams red clover leaf
15 grams red clover flower
15 grams peppermint

Combine all in a large bowl, toss until well combined, then store in ziplock bags in a dark cupboard away from heat and light. Steep 6-8 Tbsp in 2 quarts boiling water for 2 hours, strain, add honey or other sweetener if desired, and refrigerate.

The easiest way I found to do this is with a bowl on the kitchen scale using the tare function (i.e. zero it out after each addition). If you don't have a scale, you can also do it in parts: i.e. 1 part peppermint etc., 2 parts oatstraw, 4 parts RRL.

Jane (7/2005)

I take the alfalfa as a tea--I mix 1 part alfalfa, 1 part mint and make a large pot and then chill it. (I'm thinking about adding the dandelion to this mix for the iron). It is a very refreshing tea (I have to make lots because my husband and son both drink it). It's also invigorating--no need for coffee in the morning!

Kirstin (7/2005)

The Amazing Alfalfa Plant, a little of what it can do, for you and your clients.



Alfalfa tablets are a little known, very inexpensive, nutritional supplement that has been of great benefit to my clients and myself for over 29 years.

The roots of the alfalfa plant have been measured to descend over 85 feet down into the earth, bringing up many nutrients and micro-nutrients in concentrated amounts (especially when compared with most other food sources). They are very high in both iron and calcium (without interfering with one another as they do in regular vitamin/mineral supplements) as well as Vitamin C, Vitamin A, Vitamin E, Vitamin K and many trace minerals & micro nutrients.

Most pregnant woman don't get enough green veggies (do any of us?)
Alfalfa tablets are an inexpensive, easily found, source of nutrients beneficial to almost anyone. They are also easily transportable for help with heartburn when eating away from home.



Many of pregnancy's discomforts are alleviated by the use of alfalfa tablets: morning sickness, heartburn, constipation and anemia (with its many complications). They raise the Vitamin K levels of pregnant women (reducing post partum bleeding, both in quantity and duration). When the mother takes them during pregnancy the Vitamin K stores are increased for her newborn (reducing the possibility of bleeding problems for the baby, and the need for the routine Vitamin K shot). They also support success in lactation because they help to increase milk supply. Alfalfa hay did the same for our goats when we had them, increased their milk production by 50%.

I have found that most pregnant clients stop taking the extra prenatal iron supplements that they are given for the normal mid-trimester red blood count drop. This form of iron supplement often makes them nauseated and/or constipated, so most clients stop taking them (if the truth were known). Recent studies have supported what we have all suspected, that the standard prenatal iron supplements have little to do improvement in statistical outcomes. It appears that iron pills are still given out, more out of habit than reason. Alfalfa tablets help with nausea, constipation, and bring up the blood count in a more nutritionally sound way. They also help with swelling, whether it's the nutritional support that they provide, or an inherent quality of the alfalfa plant I do not know. I just know what I have seen them do for many people for years. Working in prenatal clinics with a mostly poor population, the women themselves are motivated to take alfalfies. They have usually heard from their friends about how much better they felt when they started taking them. It rarely takes much convincing on my part anymore.

Dosage: to avoid loose bowel movements that some clients get from too many at a time (if they have been on a typical US {low fiber} diet) I have them start slowly. I suggest that they take one the first day, and then two the second day, and so on, until they are taking two after each and two before bed. Women with excellent nutrition may not need as many, some with very poor nutritional stores will probably need more. This is the usual number that most women seem to need during pregnancy, in lactation often they can take less, again depending on other dietary intake, and past diet history what has she eaten for the last few years?)

Over the years many of my clients have told me that the alfalfa tablets have helped them so much, in so

many ways, that other family members started taking them too. I have been told that they have helped people with such diverse health complaints as: allergies, arthritis, acne, chronic fatigue, colitis, indigestion, bruising, mouth sores and vaginal infections. That I know of, no one has had any ill effects from them, only happy results. You should warn them, however, that their bowel movements will be much greener than they are used to. (Strange creatures we are, aren't we, that we pay such seriously close mention to such basic body functions?)

A few contraindications to taking them are: they should be stopped temporarily if one gets a U.T.I., as they can work to make the urine less acidic, and with a UTI you want a more acidic urine to try to keep the bacteria count down. You'll want to cut back on the number taken if one gets the "runs". This usually happens if the mom has a diet lacking in fiber, then suddenly takes a bunch of alfalfies. I have post-partum Moms take a few right after the birth to help with blood loss and bowel movements. Then they should not take any more until about the fourth or fifth post-partum day, and gradually build back up to about 4-8 a day. The reason for this is two fold, the encouragement to lactation can be too much for comfort until engorgement subsides, and newborn jaundice will take much longer to go away. (The use of dairy products by the mother also increases the length of newborn jaundice in breastfeed babies, because the hormones that are in the dairy feed come through both milks into the baby, delaying the bilirubin elimination. A delay of 7 days without dairy products is usually enough for the baby's system to catch up. There are also Homeopathic Remedies that help amazingly with newborn jaundice. The two used most often are Cheledonium or Chamomile depending on whether the baby is somewhat soft muscle tone, or tight & cranky. See other homeopathic remedies on pages 52 & 53

A Note: some pregnant women find that they have a hard time getting the tablets down, they are so dry, and the smell of them can sometimes bother them. Tell them that they can take out a day's supply, and carefully grease the tops and bottoms of them with a tiny bit of butter or margarine (or Crisco, which has even less taste) on their index finger and thumb. Gently rub each tablet in between these greasy finger surfaces. The light oily surface will slide down easier, and the aroma will be diminished as well. You can't do many more than a day's worth at a time because they will fall apart in a day from this treatment. Some women have even crushed the tablets and filled empty gelatin capsules (available at Pharmacies & Health Food stores) to make them easier to swallow. Some companies even make them up in gelatin capsules. Also see below about the coated kind from Vitamin Shoppe

I realize that there may be women out there who have lots of different health problems, I feel that I need to point out for anyone that might not know: since Alfalfa tablets are very high in Vitamin K they could be dangerous to take too many for anyone that needs to be on blood thinners like Heparin. Be aware that even PLANTS can have SIDE EFFECTS! (Remember about tobacco)

I now usually order my Alfalfa tablets from Vitamin Shoppe they are about \$10 for 1,000 + P&H, call 800-223-1216 EST, or www.vitaminshoppe.com. I order their own brand as they have a thin coating on them that makes them much easier to swallow, and less aromatic in the bottle when you open them up. There are cheaper brands, but often they are the dry surface kind which are harder to get down, especially if you are in the early stages of pregnancy and the gag reflex is still in the hyper mode. I have been told recently that alfalfa crops are some of the most highly sprayed crops grown, so it might be worth buying an organic brand. Be sure that there are no other ingredients in them, some have mint in them (which can antidote Homeos. and for most preggies makes their heartburn worse because it relaxes the esophageal sphincter — the opening from the esophagus to the stomach—backs up.. Ugh!). © Ken Brown

