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**TRANSCRIPT**

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**Podcast Title: Periconceptual care—the first gift you give your child.**

**Department: obstetrics & gynecology**

**Category: Public awareness**

Hello Everyone..... This is Dr. Hemavathy from Dept of Obstetrics and gynecology.

Today, I'd like to talk about an important but often overlooked concept—periconceptual care.

Most people think pregnancy care begins only after a positive test. However, the most critical period actually starts even before conception.

Periconceptual care refers to the steps taken before pregnancy to optimize the health of the mother and improve outcomes for the baby. This early preparation plays a key role in preventing complications and ensuring a healthy pregnancy journey.

First important aspect is nutrition. Nutrition forms the foundation of periconceptual care.

Folic acid supplementation is essential. A daily dose of 400 micrograms, started before conception, significantly reduces the risk of neural tube defects such as spina bifida. Iron is important to prevent anemia, while calcium supports bone health for both mother and baby. Rather than focusing on quantity of food, the emphasis should be on quality. A balanced diet including proteins, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts is recommended. Limiting caffeine and avoiding processed foods further supports optimal health.

Second important aspect is Lifestyle factors which also have a significant impact. Smoking, alcohol consumption, and substance use are associated with increased risks of miscarriage, fetal growth restriction, and congenital anomalies, and should be avoided. Regular moderate physical activity—such as walking or yoga—helps maintain fitness and improves

metabolic health. Achieving a healthy body mass index before conception is important, as both undernutrition and obesity are linked to adverse pregnancy outcomes.

Third is Medical Screening. Pre-pregnancy medical evaluation is another essential component. Chronic conditions such as diabetes, thyroid disorders, and hypertension should be identified and well controlled prior to conception. Immunization status must be reviewed, particularly for infections like rubella, varicella, and hepatitis B. Screening for infections such as HIV and syphilis allows for early treatment and prevention of transmission.

Last is Psychosocial & Environmental Factors. Periconceptional care also includes psychosocial and environmental aspects. Addressing stress, anxiety, and mental health concerns enhances overall well-being. Couples should be counseled regarding family planning and appropriate spacing. Avoidance of harmful environmental exposures—such as radiation, pesticides, and teratogenic medications—is equally important.

In conclusion, periconceptional care is a vital yet often underemphasized aspect of maternal health. By focusing on nutrition, lifestyle, medical optimization, and overall well-being before conception, we can significantly improve outcomes for both mother and child.

Preparation today ensures protection tomorrow.

Thank you.

**Signature of the Resource Person**

**Signature of the HOD**