

(introductory music)

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MARYN: Welcome to Indie Birth's series of podcasts here on iTunes, *Taking Back Birth*. Hi. Maryn here. Getting close to 100 episodes of this podcast. That's crazy. And today wanting to talk about supplements in pregnancy. So let's talk about all of those pills and vitamins that people often have questions about. As always, this was or is a topic that just naturally has been coming up lately. It seems to be how most of these podcasts work. So between social media—if you don't know we have a couple of Facebook groups that are unique for Indie Birth community. In fact, one is called Indie Birth Community. We also have an Indie Birth pregnancy nutrition group. And then, of course, we have a bunch of other groups for some of our classes. So lots of conversations happening as you can imagine on a weekly basis. And then here personally and locally working with pregnant women and having just a handful of new pregnant women lately that are working very hard on nutrition and getting what they need and understanding all of that and having this topic come up with each of them.

So literally, have been talking about supplements for the last couple weeks kind of without end. So I thought what a perfect podcast. So yes. Supplements, prenatal vitamins. This comes up all the time. And today I want to just look more closely at what might be necessary and what might not be. And, of course, preface it by saying that we're all individuals. We're all unique and really what we need nutritionally is going to differ. A lot of it is the same, but we do have our own unique needs. So right now I am coming to the end of my pregnancy. I have about a month left. And speaking of nutrition and supplements, I have personally, aside from helping other women, personally been focused on what I'm doing. Am I eating enough? Am I getting enough? Am I kind of covering all the categories and bases? And it's been on my mind too that, for me, food is really the source of all of these things.

And my own pill intake, I would say, over the last probably four pregnancies has decreased immensely. And I can think back—and I'm sure many of you are familiar with this for yourselves. I can think back on my supplement cabinet four pregnancies ago for whatever reason. Could be because I was still a student and—I don't know. I just remember having so many supplements and taking them. So I'm definitely a minimalist even in personality. So it definitely feels good to let a lot of that go, and I want to share some of that knowledge with you.

Excuse my sniffiness, by the way. It's some kind of allergy in the air here. I sound very congested, I realize. But onwards. So I think most people that are listening and on

these groups that we have—even the women that I work with, I think if really pushed to their own decision about taking pills would agree that they wish they could have such an amazing diet that they didn't feel they needed pills. I don't really know that anybody loves the idea of a cabinet full of pills. But definitely there's more of a feeling of not being good enough or needing to cover the bases. And we'll talk more about that. I think there is a time and a place for certain supplements. I personally do take a few. But just as far as what is the bigger picture? The bigger picture is that food should be our focus.

So if someone doesn't have access to a lot of food or great food, then that might bring something like a prenatal vitamin more to the forefront. But acknowledging as well that supplements can be expensive too. So, again, I know when I had that big cabinet of stuff to keep up on it certainly wasn't cheap. So there it is again. If we're going to be spending money on one thing or another, I think most of us would vote that food is probably our best bet. So what are we afraid of exactly?

I definitely think there are people that are overly dependent on supplements. And that doesn't even have to be just pregnant people. Obviously, supplements and vitamins and all of that is an enormous industry here in the U.S. I know here in our little tiny town of Sedona we have three stores that sell supplements. One, in particular, is called Vitamin Cottage, which anybody in Colorado knows about. We call it Natural Grocers here. Anyway, it's a great store. But really it's like over 50% supplement. So I'm glad for the stuff that I do take that I can go there and get what I think is quality supplements. But I think it's just showing us what an industry this has become. And sometimes—I don't know about you—but when I have some free time and I don't have kids trailing along, I do like to go in there and just look at what they've got. And I get out my phone, and I'll Google what the supplement is for, what people think this one is for just because I have no idea really, to be honest with you, about most of them. We're going to talk today about some very general supplements. But if you go into one of these stores, you'll see that it—this industry has just blown itself wide open. There is just millions of things, and I don't know what most of them are for.

Most of them, I would say, are for specific needs of specific people. But anyway, just kind of a weird fun thing that I do sometimes. So if you're pregnant and/or planning to be pregnant and you don't have any kind of medical condition that you are taking supplements for, then ideally it really should remain simple. And our focus really should remain on the diet. And the best part of that is that when we're really looking at the diet closely, I think it's obvious. We can then choose supplements that really suit us. And I know for me the supplements that I've chosen with a more intense focus on diet I really do feel that they help whereas I think years ago, again, when I had the infamous cabinet of supplements I don't really know that I noticed anything. I was just kind of throwing a dart at a very large target.

But I think it's different when you're focused on diet. So that really could and should be the focus for most people. And that, of course, is a bunch of other podcasts. There are a couple nutrition podcasts, if you're wanting to know more about what I'm talking about or what the needs are in pregnancy or what the Brewer Diet is or anything like that. I think you really do have to have some base knowledge first about pregnancy nutrition to be able to help someone or to be able to even help yourself. So tools like that—like the podcast or there's tons online about the Brewer Diet or just pregnancy eating in general, keeping a food journal. I know that's something I do, and I ask the women that I work with to do several times throughout their pregnancy. Tools like that can go a long way. Having someone to talk to. Most women, of course, as we know don't really have the kind of care in pregnancy that is really great for that. We all know that it's not just a stereotype but most doctors out there aren't asking pregnant women what they're eating at all. And many midwives aren't either.

So, again, why are we talking about pills? Why are we being prescribed prescription prenats, for example, when no one is even talking about food? We really do have to talk about food, and we have to kind of want to get in deep, I think, with that if we're looking to figure out what our bodies need the most. So if one isn't pregnant yet, I think the same can apply. Prenatal vitamins are often recommended for people that aren't pregnant yet. And I remember those days actually way before I was pregnant, and those being recommended by probably a doctor that I was seeing just for normal OB/GYN kind of care and thinking like that felt like a really big milestone in life to be somebody that should be on prenatal vitamins when I had really no intention of becoming pregnant for awhile.

But it is one of those things out there in our culture. Every store virtually—even Target or Walmart—sells prenatal vitamins or their own prenatal vitamin. So it's kind of this rite of passage that people might think they have to do especially before they get pregnant. So I would say the same thing applies that we've been discussing which is if you're not pregnant yet how about taking a look at what you're eating, how about getting labs done if that's what appeals to you, looking at your lifestyle, and doing this for both partners because, of course, before a baby is conceived there are two people to look at for optimum vitamin and mineral balance and all of that stuff.

So I love to say most days nobody really knows anything. And I do believe that. But I think there are some possible truths among us even so about what's going on in the world right now that would lead people to prefer or choose pills over food. So the first one is deficient soil. And I'm not a farmer. I am very far from being a farmer. I can only trust that that's probably true in most places. That our soil just isn't what it used to be. So even back in our grandmother's day, the soil was more mineral rich, and she certainly wasn't taking prenatal vitamins. At least, I don't think so. I really did try to find when this all began, this pill thing, for pregnant women. And I really couldn't find

anything. So I don't know. But I'm guessing that back in the forties and fifties women didn't. From what I could gather on the Internet, it looked like in the seventies it started to become a thing. So I really don't know. But I'm guessing if it wasn't our grandmothers then it was our great-grandmothers. They were growing their own food. The soil was rich and good. And their bodies weren't struggling with perhaps the same kinds of things that we are today.

And, again, I'm just taking that to be true. Of course, we have organic foods now and nonorganic foods and GMO and non-GMO. And in the end, I'd say we don't really know what we're getting. I mean I don't when I'm going to the grocery store. So unless you're growing your own food and you're really into that and you have a way of testing soil, I think most of us just don't know. So that's one reason people want to cover their bases, and I think that seems pretty valid.

Some other possible truths. We are under more stress perhaps than decades ago. And even if we weren't under more stress, stress, in general, can deplete the body. So another reason is really people's diets aren't all that great, and I think that's the argument for prenatal vitamins if you hear one from anybody is that most people don't eat very well. And I'm not sure that I want to argue that. I think that's probably true. However, this is kind of the cream of the crop, so to speak, you listening and people wanting to know about these kind of things that are trying. So I'd agree. Most people are not eating well. And if you're going through a pregnancy unconsciously and not paying attention to what you put in your mouth and not caring, I don't know about a pill either way. Probably doesn't even matter. So I am talking more about people that are putting effort and trying to figure out what their bodies and their babies need.

So another truth, I think, is that optimum health is our goal. And I say that a lot with the women I'm working with when food and diet and eating can feel really personal. And not just feel personal, it really is personal. So it's not uncommon with most of these people that I'm working with to encounter some uncomfortableness—that's the best way I can put it with being open about what they are eating and how much and how often. And I'd say on my end when I'm looking in, to me, it's never enough. So maybe that says something about me too. But in other words, I'm not ever telling people to stop eating as much as they are. Almost everyone seems like they're not getting enough by the standards that I'm familiar with and the knowledge that I have. So when being asked to eat more, it's a matter of optimum health. It's not that you won't produce a baby. It's not that you won't have a nice birth. Certainly, we are privileged here in the U.S. and many other countries where—just the obvious. We can eat. And that is a privilege. There are women all over the world who don't have that privilege. And supplements are the farthest things from their mind. They are just trying to get a tiny bit of nourishment so they can survive. And still isn't it amazing how our bodies are? These women will still birth babies. And most of them will survive.

But that's not our goal. Our survival is not our goal. Optimum health is. So that's why we look at food so closely, and that's why we can pick topics like this apart because we don't want to just have a baby that is alive. We want that baby to, ideally, go into his or her entire life set up with a great foundation. Let's see. Another thing I think is true is that—well, I kind of said this in the beginning. But this isn't a one size fits all process. That's kind of what sucks about things like this when people would love to just get a blanket recommendation from me or from someone else. But it just doesn't work that way. So even with the Brewer Diet, if you're not familiar, there are recommendations, and there are categories to fill. They're sort of is a way to do it, but it still has to meet your needs. Your caloric needs, your stress levels, all of those kind of things. So it's a constant assessment. And being, again, at the end of a pregnancy, I was joking to a mom I'm working with now who is working on nutrition very hard—I was saying, "I have no sympathy right now for you. It is hard work." Maybe I'm nicer when I'm not pregnant and I can be more compassionate that, "Oh, yes. It's hard to eat all these things. And yes. It's even hard to figure out how to buy this or that." Or, "Yes. We have to evaluate what you need, and that takes work and time."

But I'm feeling not very sympathetic lately. I mean it's hard to grow a baby, I think. It's hard to have even multiple pregnancies. I think the first pregnancy people definitely get off easy. Kind of whatever they do seems to work. Again, I don't think that's optimum health. But from the outside, it usually works out. But as we increase in age and pregnancies, I do think we're always assessing. And, again, I've been doing that too. Just on the daily. What am I eating? How does that feel? What do I need? What am I craving? What am I dreaming about? I had a dream the other night about eating a big bowl of avocados. And that's fine in real life. Like I don't mind avocados. But I took it as a maybe hint that I needed to up some fats. And when I looked more closely at what I had been eating, it was true. I think my body really was asking for that.

So the constant assessment can come from all kinds of places. Hopefully, it comes from ourselves, but there's nothing wrong I don't think at all with it also coming from an outside source. Hopefully, you do have a midwife or even a friend that knows enough to take a look at what you're eating and give you some feedback. So some other ways to assess, I mentioned labs. And we certainly can draw labs. We can look at iron levels. I mean we can look at vitamin D levels. We can look at all kinds of things to see how our bodies are doing. And then what else are we doing as far as maybe other alternative therapies? So some people consider herbs a supplement. Some people consider herbs a food source. I think it really can go either way depending on how you're using them and what you're using. But do those things come into play too? So something like an infusion or pregnancy tea or that kind of thing, certainly is nutritive, and part of what you're talking in as food. But they do kind of also count as supplements if there is a problem you're trying to address. So if you're making nettle

infusions to boost your iron, I'd say that that is food as medicine. But in a certain way, it does seem to be supplementing what you're already eating.

So let's just talk about prenatal vitamins for a little bit since that's really the huge focus. Again, that's really come up literally probably ten times in the last couple of weeks. And it's come up again in circles or here personally with women that are super smart and informed. So it's not a matter of intelligence. I think it's more a matter of coming out of our haze about this recommendation that's been made for years. And even smart women wanting to ask just out right, "Should I do them? Or should I not?" So this is kind of the spiel I go through when someone asks.

So as far as prenatal vitamins, I personally haven't taken them in years. And I do remember kind of parting with them. I couldn't tell you what year that was. But it did feel weird. And I remember thinking, "Is this okay? This feels really weird," because most people that take them have kept up with them, right? Through pregnancies or through breastfeeding. So I really had been taking them for awhile. So there are some—or there is some evidence that says that prenatal vitamins may just make it harder overall for your system, so it's something I like to talk about. I found this X-ray photo online of a prenatal pill not dissolving. So in other words, the X-ray showed a couple different times over the course of, I think, a couple days of this same pill not even being broken down by the body.

So I think many women feel that way, and that's even why they're asking. Someone said to me last week, "Should I take them?" And then before I could even answer, she went on to say, "But I think they don't make me feel good. And I think I feel more constipated," or someone will say, "They make me nauseous." So I think the signs are there for the people that already know what their answer is. Also consider that the liver is working a lot harder in pregnancy just to clear everything. So be nice to your liver. Don't give it some big, nasty pill to process that it really can't. And the vitamin itself, I mean prenatal vitamin can mean anything. Like I said, are you taking the Walmart version? Or have you gotten a prescription pill? I don't even know that it matters other than the alleged levels, which we'll talk about of some vitamins.

But as far as quality, I guess I'm saying. Nobody can really say what's better. So I know in midwifery for years back when I was a student, we certainly did promote the use of prenats. And the midwife I worked with was very on top of promoting food based prenats. And I think that makes sense like theoretically. And there certainly are many food based prenats. So something like Walmart, no. It's not going to be food based. It's synthetic. And then there are brands that seem more reputable nowadays. But I'm still skeptical because—well, for some other reasons that we'll talk about, but in other words, if you do want to take one or have been taking one, you've probably been taking one of the supposed better ones. They are organic many of them,

GMO free. Again, food based. Some are vegan. And made by, what we think, are higher quality companies. And if nothing else, the price reflects that. So, again, most of the women I see here if they're getting them here at the health food store they are getting supposedly the better quality, but they are spending a ton of money. And so that's part of my suggestion as well. If you feel good taking them, then go ahead. But if you don't, then it's not really worth the money in either case.

And then, of course, prenatal vitamins can come in all kinds of forms, and nobody really knows which form is more agreeable, I don't think. There's just too many variables here. So pills, capsules, even the little, chewy, jelly things, the little gummy bears. There's all kinds of ways and types and products and companies. And frankly, it's overwhelming. So I think we also have to consider that there is the industry of prenatal vitamins. And again, it's not that I don't think one could be better. I'm sure there actually is a database somewhere supposedly of which are—if they've done testing, what—which ones maintain their supposed levels or whatever. But to be honest, I haven't looked at that because I'm not really that interested in any of that because they all promote their own brand. It's like even Googling stuff for this podcast it was really hard to separate fact from fiction. What is actually going on and what is just this company wanting to sell more. There's just so much of that right now. And doctors and all kinds of specialists that say they work only with pregnant women or have lots of experience have created their own vitamin.

So you may know more about all of these different types and brands than I do. I feel like every time I look or I'm at someone's house, literally, they'll hand me a bottle I've never seen before. So there was a study where they studies prescription prenatal vitamins, and only three out of nine of these brands were found to release the amount of folic acid they claimed to contain. So this means that even though they contain the folic acid, the body didn't absorb it. And, of course, there's a huge discussion around folic acid and folate. But I think the bioavailability of any of these, no one is really going to know. So prenatal vitamins are sort of by definition not balanced, which might sound funny. But as you look more closely at perhaps the nutrients that you do want to include—so again, remember, I'm not saying that all supplements are bad.

So let's take something like calcium, for example. You do want to include calcium in your diet. And if you're really not getting enough for food or maybe you have some risk factor, like you've had pre-eclampsia before, then you do want to increase your calcium. So it seems like the recommendation even to prevent pre-eclampsia would be about 1,500 to 2,000 milligrams a day. Well, the included amount of calcium in a prenatal vitamin is only usually between 100 to 200 milligrams. So I know it feels—it does to me too—kind of overwhelming when you look at the package, right? You look at that prenatal vitamin, and there literally is like 200 things listed. And I think that gives us the feeling like we need it or we're missing out. But just a little fact like that about the

calcium or the fact that many of them include synthetic versions of the vitamins such as vitamin A, which is called retinol, that's not ideal. And that can cause problems in excess as opposed to the natural form that comes from food of vitamin A.

So in other words, these pills are just a conglomerate of who knows what. And unless you really know all your stuff, then you really don't even know if the levels you're getting are (a) appropriate for you or (b) if you're getting them at all just depending on how your body absorbs it. So I do understand that many women feel like they have this magical protection with a prenatal vitamin. And, again, I'm not or wouldn't tell someone to go against their instinct. So I'm sure there's many people that do take them, and they're perfectly healthy and fine. And that's great. Again, there's just been a lot of questions. So I feel like there are many women out there that, obviously, don't. It's kind of like when you're birthing. And if you have to ask somebody if you're ready to push, you're probably not. So it's the same kind of feeling with this. Like I feel like when people are asking, it's more like they want the permission of someone else to say, "No." I mean they're really not a benefit. And they really haven't been proven in any significant study to improve outcomes.

So if you feel like they offer you this magical protection, then perhaps you'll reconsider or perhaps you'll just keep taking them. Whatever works for you. Let's see. What did I write here? Oh, it was a little paragraph from one of the sources. "In almost all studies, multivitamin use was significantly associated with a number of factors that are also known to improve pregnancy outcomes." So higher socioeconomic status, not smoking, more education, married status, nonminority race. "Therefore, although these observational studies attempted to control for these factors, residual confounding is a major issue. It just may be that healthier women take vitamins, and healthier women have better pregnancy outcomes." So this is definitely something to consider, right? People with even greater access to prenatal care are probably being put on prenatal vitamins. So we really can't separate that from the fact that already they have improved outcomes.

I did find this study that I just thought was interesting. Honestly, I would have to go back and look at the size of the study. My gut feeling is it probably wasn't a very large study so just to take it with a grain of salt. And don't let something like this scare you either. I just thought it was interesting that there actually was such a study. So it was a study on prenatal vitamins and miscarriage. And I think the first statement is really the truest. I don't really know how they wound up with their end result here. But they say, "Taking any vitamin supplements prior to pregnancy or in early pregnancy does not prevent women experiencing miscarriage or stillbirth." And, again, I thought that was kind of reassuring in a way and pointing towards the fact that a pill doesn't solve all problems. And usually, miscarriage is not the result for most women of not eating well. But it goes on to say, "However, women taking vitamin supplements may be more likely to have a

multiple pregnancy. So there is insufficient evidence to examine the effects of different combinations of vitamins on miscarriage, stillbirth, or other maternal and infant outcomes.”

So in a way, it kind of says nothing. It just says we don't really know anything but interesting I thought, right? Maybe more likely to have a multiple pregnancy. Who knows why? So that was kind of meant to be more fun, that last study. I really don't know of any great evidence to support prenatal vitamins. And, again, in the studies where they've either said on either side of the coin, they really haven't been big enough studies to tell us anything. And the truth is nobody is going to take a group of pregnant women and sort of deprive them of this alleged bonus of a prenatal vitamin and study them. So these studies are really kind of weird to read. Many of them—they're even just asking the women after the fact. Like it's not really a very controlled study. So I think we're left with what I started with which is we don't really know anything. We do know that, like I said, they may not be absorbed well, the levels may not be correct for you. They may include synthetic versions. They may just, frankly, stop up your body and not do a darn thing. But nobody really knows. So I do think it's something we each have to decide. And I think considering all of those angles is kind of interesting.

So if you're considering not taking them or, honestly, even if you are, this is kind of a subnutrition section here. But I think there are things to think about. So your midwife can help you or you can kind of work on this yourself. But just see—perform that constant assessment of yourself. And I think that's sort of maybe not normal for everyone. I don't know. But I don't think it's a weird thing to do in pregnancy for yourself, right? Aren't you always kind of thinking, “How am I feeling? How am I doing? What's going on?” And you're noticing things about yourself. So am I swelling? Have I had lots of heartburn? Have I had lots of practice contractions? Just you're not even asking yourself. You're just knowing what has come up for you. So do you have any complaints, I think, is a great way to say it. What's bothering you or not? What kind of signs or symptoms of anything to you have? What do you feel the needs are of your pregnancy at this time? And I think that's really crucial. The needs of pregnancy, even on paper, are not the same at the beginning of pregnancy for all kinds of reasons. Blood volume, what the fetal development is doing. And the needs at the end of pregnancy, I think, are substantially different.

And just talk to a few pregnant women throughout a pregnancy even as far as food and you'll hear that or see that, right? We do from maybe morning sickness and nausea and cravings to having that disappear. Sometimes it comes back at the end of pregnancy. Many women kind of crave carbs at the end of pregnancy in a way, I think, to prepare for labor. So there's all kinds of clues our bodies can give us. And if we're not able to meet the needs with food, then I think it's certainly is a fine time to turn to supplements. So preexisting health conditions, of course. So your list may be different

than mine. Probably will be. What is your gut health? That's another thing to consider, I think, with food and supplements. And if you're at the beginning of a pregnancy, in particular, then how you ate before pregnancy. So there's all kinds of discussions you could have. And in other words, this is all to figure out what do you need. Do you want that prenatal? Do you need it? What other supplements would be great for you?

So, again, I think it's a balancing act. It's always changing. That was my no sympathy comment. Being pregnant is a full time job. I find it is anyway. And even with these podcasts, you can see that I'm not all focusing right now on a lot of things that don't apply to me personally because it's just too hard. My brain can't sort of tackle all those things. Being pregnant and eating is pretty much what I do. So of course, we can round all the nutrition out with other person balance. So being a whole person and moving our bodies and taking care of our emotional stuff and all of those kind of things really do matter as well. And let's see. What else did I have here?

Just that prenatal pills, the prenatal vitamin, and even iron pills, it's really in the medical world a commentary once again on how pregnancy is viewed. So I kind of like that philosophical approach sometimes. It's really that one size fits all. That I am like you and you're like me. And the lack of attention and education for actual counseling—and, again, this isn't just at a doctor's office. There are many midwives operating the same way. Excuse me. I'm very sniffy. And then, finally—well, not really finally, but I think I'll stop with this part of the talk. There is a lack of understanding about the way the body actually works physiologically in pregnancy. So, again, not to go down a rabbit hole if you don't know about blood volume expansion and the Brewer Diet, then please listen to the other podcasts or get yourself some other information because that's really key in understanding some of this especially iron levels.

So if someone doesn't understand that, then they're going to think they're anemic when they're not, and all kinds of things can actually kind of go wrong with adding supplements for conditions that are not needed. And iron really is a toxic supplement when it's not food based. So the synthetic iron that's out there whether it's in the prenatal vitamin or, again, as an iron supplement can be really toxic. And my experience is most women don't actually need that. They're not iron deficient. They're not anemic, but they don't understand and their doctors don't understand the way the blood volume expansion works. So it's an innocent thing until it's not. And if you're that pregnant women—woman, excuse me—that is becoming toxic or constipated or both of those things due to an iron supplement then suddenly I think it's a bigger deal than just being a pill.

So yes. The mainstream world is obsessed with iron levels in pregnant women. And from the little bit of research I could find, it seemed like that was really the reason for this thing called a prenatal vitamin as opposed to a multivitamin for any old person. A

pregnancy prenatal vitamin differs with the addition of iron and folic acid and, in more recent decades, the idea of fish oils being included. So that's kind of the categories that stick out and, again, may or may not be necessary for you in your pregnancy. However, I would still sort of argue that even those are necessary for you like iron that a prenatal vitamin is probably the worst way to try and get that into your body.

The folic acid debate or maybe it's not even a debate at this point. But we know that folic acid is synthetic and that folate is a better source. So I think that's just repeating what I've said which is yes. Folate is necessary. Yes. We'd love if all pregnant women specifically women that actually aren't pregnant yet three months before or even longer—three to six months before they become pregnant have adequate folate levels to prevent cleft palate and those sorts of things. So, again, I do think that's valid. We do wish that for everyone. But the folic acid that's in the processed prenatal vitamin may or may not be helping that. And if it is helping that, that's great. But we're not sure to what cost all of the other things are doing. So, again, it's just something I think that nobody can decide for you.

Let's see. Oh, here was a little statement about fish oils really not showing any benefit. So that's something you could go down a rabbit hole with as far as pregnancy goes. I kind of stopped myself frankly from going down the rabbit hole because I don't see the logic in fish oils as a supplement. And that is thanks to the great Gail Hart, who has a lot to say about how that's just not normal. That nobody in their human way would possibly ingest that much fish to get that much oil. We do know that fish oil supplements specifically at the end of pregnancy may cause a blood thinning effect, which is not a good thing as you're about to birth. So I, again, just didn't go down the rabbit hole really of whether or not a fish oil was a great idea in pregnancy. I think there are lots of other great ways to get those specific oils and fats, and I realize that not everyone eats fish. But there have been studies that really do show how awesome fish is for a diet.

So we could go down that rabbit hole too of mercury and contamination and that kind of thing. But with the best choices that we can make with where we live and our budget and those sorts of things, fish is still, from what I can see, pretty amazing for pregnancy. I think it's two servings of fish per week prolongs—not prolongs pregnancy. But in a good way. Prevents preterm labor kind of thing. I had found another study—and, again, I'm not sure how great this one was. But something about women who had ingested fish oil—fish, not fish oil—sorry. Fish. Had a lower rate of allergic children, which is something that, as you can hear in my voice, does apply to my. So I'm always kind of curious how to possibly prevent such things as allergies being passed on.

But anyway, my point is that fish as a food source seems to be really beneficial. That is very clear in studies. And fish oils not so much. So if you're choosing a prenatal

vitamin for one of those top three reasons, which, again, is iron, folic acid, or newly fish oil, the perhaps it's not worth it. Perhaps it's worth looking more into your diet and gauging how you can get what you're seeking from that fish oil. Let's see. There was a Cochrane review of 49 trials involving more than 20,000 pregnant women—so to me, that's a significant number. And they showed that although prophylactic iron supplementation was associated with higher hemoglobin levels—duh—in the peripartum period, there were no differences in maternal or neonatal clinical outcomes. In addition, significant adverse effects were noted especially hemoconcentration and constipation. Yep. So possibly toxicity although that's not what it says but constipation.

So that's not surprising. That's exactly what I had just said which is if you don't understand the way blood volume expansion works and you go prescribing especially a fake iron supplement to all kinds of women then that's what's going to happen. Yeah. You're going to see it on their labs that their hemoglobin level is higher. But to what cost? Especially when there's no increase in any kind of positive outcome. So there's all kinds of studies out there, believe me. I could have talked about three billion more. But those were some, I think, that highlight some of these points. Okay.

So the final section here, I think, is what do you take if you want to. And once again, I'll be repetitive here. You take what you need. And that, I think, is the tricky part. So this isn't a section where I tell you what to take because I don't know you. But this is the section where I can talk about what I take and, again, refer you back to the very beginning, which is look at your diet, have someone to work with, get some good information about all of those things, and be gauging how you feel, and what your symptoms and complaints are, and how your baby is growing, and a million other things. But for me here at the end of pregnancy and, again, this has shifted for me throughout the pregnancy. I think I was taking different stuff in the beginning, and I can't even remember sort of what that was at this point. It all just changes based on need.

So right now, for me with a month to go, I do take a vitamin D supplement. And to be honest, I wished I had discovered that earlier. And even though I just said I'm not going to tell you what to take because I don't know you I would urge you to do some research into vitamin D supplementation and pregnancy, if you haven't. And I admittedly haven't. I kind of went so anti supplement for while there, and I live in the sunniest place, literally, in the universe. So I really was convinced that I did not need vitamin D supplement because I do get out every day. But alas, it seems that most people do anyway just with the way they absorb it and getting older. And so I didn't, honestly, get my vitamin D levels tested. I just kind of wanted to try it out, and I figured I'd know. And I feel like I really do. I'm just taking—I think it's 2,000—excuse me. My nose. 2,000 IUs a day of vitamin D. It's a chewable. Again, there's all kinds of dos and don'ts that you could read. But I found what I think works for me. And I have to say I really do

notice, and it's one of the very few supplements in my life I feel like I've noticed a positive outcome from. So I do feel less tired. I do feel more energetic. And really it was just the research minimally that I had done on the amount of vitamin D that the baby seems to take in the second and third trimesters. So I do urge you to look at that, and I do think that that's probably one of the only supplements that across the board we all could take. And I haven't found anything to make me think that's crazy. So that's what I've taken to these days personally. And, again, with the women that I've been working with urging them to do that research and to even just take one and see how they feel since—yeah. It seems sort of epidemic proportions that we are deficient in vitamin D.

So next on my list is a probiotic and a prebiotic. And you can look into what each of those are. But I really do notice a difference for me just in the way my bowels seem to be moving or food is digested. Prebiotics have been helpful for me as well in preventing headaches. I don't think I've gotten more than two headaches this whole pregnancy. Calcium is something that, I think, is a lot like vitamin D. We need because the baby is taking so much. So I used to take a cal mag combination. And I separated them for lots of reasons. I was taking a natural Calm, which is the powder—the ionic magnesium powder. And gosh, I can't remember what form that is in. I don't have it in front of me. But to put it succinctly, that was not working for me at all in pregnancy. The magnesium powder. It was giving me all kinds of gastro upset and even with a limited dose. So I understand that you don't overdo it, but I wasn't. It was just not agreeing with my pregnant self even though it's something I had taken for years.

And then the more research I did realized that it's really not a very good form of magnesium. It's not very absorbable. And I switched to magnesium glycinate, which has been amazing and life changing for me. And I'll do a podcast eventually on, I think, irritable uterus or practice contractions kind of thing. Basically, magnesium glycinate has rescued me from too many annoying contractions, which is never something I've dealt with so that was kind of new. And I had to figure out what my body was asking for. But that was the magic bullet. So I will not go off that at all. Not until the end of this pregnancy or probably not even then.

So liver pills come in for me on some days. I don't do lab testing for myself or haven't—I don't—I shouldn't say I don't because I have in the past. But I haven't this pregnancy. I just haven't felt the need to do that. I don't think my iron is low at all. I think it's a blood volume expansion thing if anything. But on the days that I'm feeling kind of low energy and I'm not eating red meat or I don't feel like I'm getting other great food sources of iron, then I will take some liver pills. And those are pastured, grass fed, and that kind of thing so pretty good quality. And then really all I ever take occasionally otherwise is maybe some vitamin C especially if I'm around kids that are sick or something. So in other words, immune support. I'll cut up some fresh garlic and

swallow that, if I'm around sick people. I'm trying to keep the pills to a minimum. So yeah. For me, it really comes back to the vitamin D, the probiotics, the probiotics, calcium, and magnesium. And I've found that to be suiting my needs at the moment. Not to say it's going to be that way next week, but we'll see.

Another supplement that I think is sort of the side of food can be a green supplement. I was taking one, and then honestly, I ran out. And I think when you don't remember to buy something sometimes it's a sign that your body is okay. It doesn't need it because I'm really religious about supplements. I'm kind of like ridiculously religious meaning I never forget with the ones that I need I literally never forget. So if I forgot something, it, to me, means I don't really need it right now. But if you're looking for a great green supplement, look up the HealthForce company. I love their products, and I'm not a spokesperson or anything. Like I don't get anything for recommending them. I just think their stuff is awesome. They have a vitamineral greens that you can get in a powder, or you can get in capsules. And if you're really not getting greens in your diet, then I think something like that is a must. And they're so amazing probably way better than any of us would eat green wise either which I kind of hate to say because I do think food is preferable for many reasons. But these greens have sea vegetables and herbs and all kinds of stuff in them.

So yeah. Just to say that I think there are some really awesome supplements out there that do make a difference, and you can literally feel the difference. And I think how to choose those is similar but different topic. I think just going to a reputable store is a great start and just looking at the label with something like vitamin D or magnesium. What else is in it? You don't want a pill with a lot of extra stuffers. You really just want to stick to whatever it is you're trying to supplement. And, of course, you can do your research on companies and having it be organic or not. In the end, like I said, I'm not sure that anyone really knows anything. But if you're feeling better from whatever you're doing or it's solving a problem for you, then I think, again, that's where great supplement and food balance comes in.

So I hope that's helpful on your road to having a super healthy pregnancy and birth. And thanks for listening. You can check out our Indie Birth site for all kinds of new information. Something new we've been doing for those of you that are even faithful listeners we've been having lots of new online classes with experts around the world. So for example, this coming weekend we have midwife Joy Horner from the UK teaching a breech birth class online. And we've tried to keep them super inexpensive. They're all about \$30. So two-hour class, and you get the recording. So you can just check out the site for the upcoming classes. Anybody can take these classes by the way. You don't have to be a member of anything else that we do to sign up for one of these online classes. We have Karen Strange doing one on neonatal resuscitation in

May of 2017. So, again, just check the Indie Birth site. Find us on Facebook or Instagram, and you'll often know about things there. And have a great day.

(closing music)