

## Best Body™

BALANCE • EXERCISE • STYLE • TASTE

JULY/AUGUST 2005 ©

67 M  
A NEW

- Reshape
- Trim Your
- Build Sex

SCULPT  
DREAM  
10 EasySLIM  
DOWN  
FAST!  
5 Steps  
Instant SBEAU  
ARMS  
Get Tank-11 EXE  
FOR BETV STAR  
JENN  
O'DE  
Talks Fitn  
After Pre

BALANCE

SEXUAL ? FITNESS

By Katie Caruana

## Motherhood

THE BODYWEIGHT CONNECTION

**A**s many of us can attest, it's hard not to get caught up in the myriad of expectations placed upon the female sex. Unfortunately, when our good intentions turn into obsession, the results can be quite disastrous. As societal ideals align beauty more and more with being thin, women are starting to push themselves beyond physical limits to live up to this conception. But ironically, in our quest to become the "ideal woman," we often end up alienating our bodies from our most natural and unique role: Our ability to become mothers.

**How**  
your  
weight  
could be  
affecting  
your  
chances of  
getting  
pregnant.

When it comes to pregnancy, maintaining a healthy weight is vital — from our efforts to conceive all the way to our body's recovery period after childbirth. To get an expert's insight on the matter, we spoke with Fady Sharara, M.D., a board-certified reproductive endocrinologist, fertility expert and OB/GYN. He covers it all, explaining what you really need to know when it comes to weight maintenance and pregnancy.

For women who are under or overweight, their chances of conceiving are notably decreased. Studies have shown that women who maintain a body mass index below 20 or above 30 have a more difficult time getting pregnant. For women who are underweight, their reduced bodyfat is a significant factor in terms of ovulation. "Even moderate weight loss of 10-15 percent under the ideal bodyweight can result in an irregular menstrual cycle," Sharara explains.

Being of excess weight carries fertility problems of its own. "Estrogen is a fat-soluble hormone that is released by the ovaries," says

Sharara. "This means that in a woman with excessive bodyfat, estrogen is dissolved in the fat and slowly released back into circulation, which can impair the fertility process." In addition, polycystic ovarian syndrome, a condition that can affect a woman's menstrual cycle and fertility, has been repeatedly linked with weight gain or obesity.

And even if you *are* able to get pregnant, this doesn't mean your weight issues won't have an effect on your unborn child. "Women who are overweight and underweight carry potentially significant risks for themselves and the baby," the doctor warns, "such as preterm labor, diabetes, high blood pressure and low birth weight." So if you think your current weight might be an issue, you should visit your OB/GYN and get a thorough examination to identify the risks and evaluate your health — for your benefit, and, of course, your baby's.

Even after conceiving, proper weight control is very important. Many women struggle with achieving the delicate balance of gaining the right amount of weight during this time. "Pregnancy is not the time for calorie restriction," says Sharara. "Depending on her initial starting weight, each woman needs to check with her obstetrician concerning the calorie requirements. The ideal weight gain is 25-28 lbs." This number does fluctuate depending on your pre-pregnancy weight, so for the most accurate advice, be certain to consult your doctor.

Another hot topic is the outlandish cravings women experience during pregnancy. Is it better to give in to them, or stick to a more regimented diet? The doctor says they are perfectly normal, and there's nothing wrong with indulging in them, as long as they don't become long-standing habits post-pregnancy. He stresses eating a healthy, balanced diet, but advises staying away from any raw meat or fish at this time.

And after childbirth, we must deal with the dreaded post-baby weight. This can be a frustrating time for many women, especially for those of us who have long considered being in shape an important part of our lives. But we must ask ourselves: "Is losing weight more important than my health — not to mention the health of my baby?"

"The first six weeks after delivery are important, as the body tries to recover from the changes that occurred over the past nine months," Sharara says. So take it easy, particularly during this time, as you don't want to push your body while it is in recovery mode, no matter how badly you want to get back in your skinny jeans. Your best bet is to exercise in moderation and eat a healthy, balanced diet. "This is not the time to go on calorie restriction, especially if breastfeeding," says the doctor.

So in the end, Sharara's advice is really pretty simple: "Stay healthy, eat healthy and consult your doctor!" With pregnancy, as in general health, it is important to eat and exercise in moderation, listen to what your body is telling you and consult with the experts. Doctor's orders! ★

BULOUS  
YLES  
FALLO-FUSS  
ARIAN  
ECIPESOR YOUR  
TYPEY GYMS:  
For You?

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUNSTAR

September 4, 2005  
\$6.99 CAN