

More successful pregnancy with poorer diet?

The poorer the quality of the mother's diet, the greater the chance of a viable baby that is carried to term after in-vitro fertilization. That is the conclusion of a study by Janine Faessen, a PhD candidate in Human Nutrition & Health. 'We were amazed when we saw the results of our analyses.'

Faessen looked at whether women who had in-vitro fertilization (IVF) had a greater chance of a successful pregnancy if their diet was of a higher quality — expressed as percentage compliance with the 2015 Good Diet Guidelines published by the Dutch Health Council. The expectation was that the answer would be yes because individual product groups such as wholemeal grains, polyunsaturated fatty acids, proteins and iron and folic acid supplements all increase female fertility. But the conclusion from Faessen's study is the exact opposite. 'This confirms how complex nutritional research is. Your diet is part of your lifestyle and there are a lot of interdependencies; take exercise and stress or relaxation for example, as well as things like sleep and even a sense of purpose. Also, a lot of nutritional studies are observational, with the researchers following a group of people for a set period. They then try to find statistical associations in the data they have collected. That doesn't give you the same level of proof that you get from trials of medicines versus a placebo, for instance. In nutritional science you always need more research to confirm what you suspect.'

New ideas

Although the results are not in line with what the researchers expected, it was still a valuable study. 'These results have given me a lot of new ideas,' concludes the PhD candidate, who is working on an app with dietary advice for pregnant women and new mothers. 'During pregnancy, a lot of emphasis is put on food safety and all the things you aren't allowed to eat. We want to put more emphasis on a healthy diet and the things that *are* allowed, including in the period before getting pregnant.' DV