

Nutrition Guidelines During Pregnancy

Healthy eating for you and your baby

Being pregnant is a big life change. It affects you physically, mentally, and emotionally, and it may require you to learn new skills. This handout explains why it is important to eat a healthy diet during pregnancy.

Why is it important to watch what I eat during pregnancy?

What you eat during pregnancy affects your baby's health now and in future years. It is important to eat a healthy diet for both you and your baby.

This is a good time to review what you eat, your calorie and supplement needs, food safety information, physical activity guidelines, and your weight goals for pregnancy.



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How much weight gain is normal during pregnancy?

A slow, steady weight gain is usually advised during pregnancy. For a woman who starts pregnancy at a healthy weight, gaining 25 to 35 pounds is normal. See the chart on page 2 for weight gain recommendations based on a person's body mass index (BMI). BMI is calculated by using your weight in kilograms (kg) and height in meters (m).

Weight gain during pregnancy occurs from:

- Your growing baby and placenta
- Increased blood volume
- Increased muscle mass and fat to support both you and your baby

If you are expecting more than one baby, your weight gain will be larger. Your pregnancy care provider or dietitian can adjust your weight gain guidelines for your pregnancy.

If you gain weight too quickly, you will need to need to take in fewer calories by cutting down on extras like sweets and fatty foods.

Pregnancy is **not** the time to lose weight. Tell your pregnancy care provider if you have nausea, vomiting, lose your appetite, or lose weight.

BMI Before Pregnancy	BMI (kg/m ²)	Total Weight Gain	Rate of Weight Gain for 2nd and 3rd Trimesters
Underweight	Lower than 18.5	28 to 40 pounds	1 to 1.3 pounds per week
Normal weight	18.5 to 24.9	25 to 35 pounds	0.8 to 1 pounds per week
Overweight	25.0 to 29.9	15 to 25 pounds	0.5 to 0.7 pounds per week
Obese	30.0 or higher	11 to 20 pounds	0.4 to 0.6 pounds per week

Table used with permission from Weight Gain During Pregnancy: Reexamining the Guidelines, 2009, by the National Academy of Sciences, Courtesy of the National Academies Press, Washington, D.C. (www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12584)

How many calories do I need to eat every day?

In your 2nd trimester, you will need to eat about 300 more calories a day than you ate before pregnancy. In your 3rd trimester, you will need to eat about 450 extra calories a day.

If you are expecting more than one baby, your calorie needs will be different. Please ask your pregnancy care provider or dietitian for guidelines.

Do I need to take vitamins?

A prenatal vitamin can help ensure that you and your baby are getting the nutrients you need. Buy a prenatal supplement that contains:

- 200 mg calcium
- 400 to 800 mcg folic acid
- 400 IU vitamin D
- 15 mg zinc
- 27 mg iron
- 200 mg DHA
- At least 150 mcg iodine (220 to 250 mcg is recommended in pregnancy)

Some of the brands that meet these guidelines include:

- Bayer One A Day Prenatal with DHA
- Safeway Care One Daily Prenatal Combo Pack with DHA and Folic Acid
- Centrum Specialist Prenatal with DHA
- Pharmacist's Support Prenatal +DHA
- Similac Prenatal
- Rainbow Light Prenatal One
- Rainbow Light Prenatal Petite (does not have DHA)
- Carlson Prenatal Multiple with DHA
- Twin Labs Prenatal Care (does not have DHA)
- NOW Prenatal Gels +DHA

Take your prenatal supplement every day. You will also need to take a vitamin D supplement that contains 2,000 to 4,000 IU every day.

Take your prenatal supplements with food to help avoid stomach upset. Talk with your pregnancy care provider about the safety of all medicines and herbal supplements before you take them.

If You Are a Vegan

If you are a vegan, you will need to take these extra supplements every day:

- 2.0 mg of vitamin B12
- 300 mg choline – look for *choline bitartrate*, which you can buy at most stores that sell vitamins and supplements

We recommend that pregnant women get 1,000 mg of calcium each day. If you do not drink milk or eat other dairy products, take a 500 mg calcium supplement twice a day.

What foods are best to eat while I'm pregnant?

We recommend that you eat foods that are rich in nutrients, and that you include many different foods in your diet. Visit the website www.ChooseMyPlate.com for more information and detailed plans.

Make sure to eat from all food groups: fruits, vegetables, grains, meats and beans, dairy, and healthy fats and oils. A growing baby needs foods from all of these food groups.

See the table on the next page for some tips about what to eat every day to keep your diet varied and healthy.

Food Group	How Much to Eat Each Day	Examples
Grains	1st trimester: 6 ounces 2nd and 3rd trimesters: 8 ounces	1 ounce = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 slice of bread • 1 oz. ready to eat cereal • ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, or hot cereal • 1 6-inch tortilla
Vegetables	2½ cups	1 cup = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup raw or cooked vegetables • 2 cups raw leafy greens
Fruit	2 cups	1 cup = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup fresh or canned fruit • ½ cup dried fruit
Dairy	3 cups	1 cup = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup milk or yogurt • 1½ ounces hard cheese
Protein	1st trimester: 5½ ounces 2nd and 3rd trimesters: 6½ ounces	1 ounce = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 egg • 1 tablespoon peanut butter • ½ ounce nuts • ½ cup cooked beans • 1 oz. fish, meat, or poultry

Adapted from Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Nutrition Care Manual 2012.

Nutrients in Food

Protein

- Good sources of protein include lean meat, chicken, turkey, fish, low-fat dairy products, eggs, cheese, beans (legumes), tofu, nuts, and peanut butter.
- Eat about 12 ounces of fish a week. Choose types of fish that are low in mercury content, like light tuna or salmon. Avoid fish that are high in mercury. Some of these are swordfish, tilefish, shark, king mackerel and albacore tuna. To learn more about what fish are safest to eat, visit www.doh.wa.gov/communityandenvironment/food/fish/healthyfishguide.aspx.
- If you do not want to eat fish, try eating other dietary sources of DHA, like walnuts, wheat germ, or omega-3 enriched eggs.

Fat

- Your baby needs healthy fats during pregnancy and breastfeeding to develop. Choose olive oil, fatty fish (like salmon), avocados, seeds, nuts, peanut butter, and salad dressings made with healthy oils.
- Read food labels. Avoid foods that contain hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated fat. These contain unhealthy trans fat.

Carbohydrate

- Choose whole grain products like whole wheat bread, brown rice, whole grain pasta, oatmeal, barley, quinoa, bulgur, millet, and kasha.
- Limit refined carbohydrates and instant grains found in foods like sweets, cookies, sodas, instant oatmeal, and instant rice.
- Fruits and vegetables are healthy carbohydrate sources. Choose dark and brightly colored fruits and vegetables – they are good sources of vitamins and minerals. Eat whole fruit instead of drinking fruit juice.

Fluids

- Drink enough water so that you never feel thirsty and so that your urine is light in color. Many pregnant women carry a water bottle with them to ensure that they drink enough water.
- Limit your intake of juices and other sweetened beverages.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Limit your intake of caffeine to 200 milligrams (about 1 cup of coffee) a day. If you currently drink more than that, cut back slowly.

Food and Safety Information

During pregnancy, you have a higher chance of getting infections and illnesses from certain foods. Some basic food safety practices can greatly reduce your chance of becoming ill. Remember to:

- Wash your hands before, during, and after you prepare food.
- Keep the area where you prepare and cook food clean.
- Wash fruits and vegetables before you cook or eat them.
- Keep meat, fish, and poultry in the refrigerator until you cook them.
- Keep raw meat, fish, and poultry separate from all other foods. Use a different cutting board for them.
- Fully cook eggs and meats. Avoid eating raw or undercooked meat, fish, or poultry. Be sure to heat:
 - Fish and beef roasts to 145°F (62.8°C)
 - Eggs and meats (including pork) to 160°F (71.1°C)
 - Poultry breast to 170°F (76.7°C)
 - Whole poultry to 180°F (82.2°C)
 - Hot dogs or deli meat until steaming, about 165°F (73.9°C)
- Avoid eating foods from salad bars, deli counters, buffets, sidewalk vendors, and food carts.

- Avoid unpasteurized cheese, milk, and juice. Soft cheeses, like feta, Brie, Gorgonzola, Camembert, and queso fresco are often unpasteurized. Read labels carefully.
- Avoid refrigerated smoked seafood unless it is a part of a cooked dish.
- Avoid foods made with raw or undercooked eggs, like cookie dough, Caesar salad dressing, and homemade ice cream.
- Put food in the refrigerator right after cooking and serving. Do not eat cooked food and food that needs to be stored in the refrigerator if it has been out of the refrigerator for more than 2 hours.
- Avoid keeping food in the “danger zone,” 40°F to 140°F (4.4°C to 60°C). Bacteria grow easily in this range of temperatures.
- If you have cats, have someone else clean the cat litter box.

To learn more about food safety while you are pregnant, visit www.foodsafety.gov/poisoning/risk/pregnant/chklist_pregnancy.html.

Special Concerns

Nausea and Vomiting

Pregnancy is not the time to lose weight. Talk with your pregnancy care provider if you:

- Are vomiting
- Lose your appetite
- Lose weight

If you lose your appetite, do **not** stop eating. Try these tips:

- Eat small meals about every 2 hours, so your stomach is never empty.
- Eat a few crackers (or any other food you can handle) before getting out of bed in the morning and during the night if you wake up.
- Eat a snack that contains protein, like cheese, eggs, meat, fish, nuts, or peanut butter, at bedtime.
- Try different textures, like smooth pudding or crunchy cereal, and try foods with different tastes (sweet, salty, spicy).
- Try eating salty foods (pretzels or crackers) with foods that contain acid (lemonade, an orange, or tomato juice).
- Avoid stale or strong cooking odors. Pleasant smells like lemons or orange peels may help reduce nausea.
- Try eating crystallized ginger or drinking ginger tea or lemonade. These may settle your stomach.
- Stay hydrated. Fruit juices diluted with water or carbonated water may settle your stomach better than plain water.

If you try these tips and still have nausea, try taking:

- 25 mg of vitamin B6 (pyridoxine) 3 times a day
- Unisom Sleep Tabs (active ingredient is doxalymine), 25 mg in the morning and evening

Tell your pregnancy care provider if you cannot eat or drink because of your nausea.

Cravings and Food Aversions

Changes in hormones during pregnancy can cause food aversions (strong dislike of certain foods) and cravings. If food aversions are keeping you from being able to eat the foods you need, try:

- Mild flavors and vegetables
- Smoothies with protein powder added
- Non-meat sources of protein like cheese, beans, or eggs

It is OK to indulge in your food cravings once in a while. Be aware of your serving sizes of high-calorie cravings, like ice cream. Try to eat a healthy and balanced diet.

Some women have cravings for nonfood items like clay, dirt, paper, laundry starch, or ice. This is called *pica*. Tell your pregnancy care provider if you are craving or eating nonfood items.

Premature Fullness

As your baby grows, you will feel full from less food, when you need more calories. To avoid discomfort, try to eat smaller meals more often.

Meal Ideas

Coffee and tea are OK to drink during pregnancy, but try to limit yourself to 1 cup a day.

Try to include carbohydrates, protein, and fat in all of your meals. Here are some sample meals:

Breakfast

- Well-cooked egg or peanut butter, whole grain toast, and fruit
- Granola or whole grain cereal with fruit and yogurt
- Pancakes or waffles with cottage cheese and fruit

Mid-morning Snack

- Low fat yogurt with fruit
- Hummus with carrots
- Apple with peanut butter or nuts

Lunch

- Sandwich on whole wheat bread with peanut butter and jelly; low-fat yogurt; a banana
- Rice and beans with cheese and tomatoes; an apple; small green salad
- Turkey sandwich with lettuce and tomato on whole grain bread; milk; an apple

Mid-afternoon Snack

- Cheese or hard boiled egg; crackers
- Small handful of trail mix
- Peanut butter on toast

Dinner

- Tortilla with rice, beans, cheese, bell pepper and onion; melon cubes; milk
- Lean beef cubes over noodles with cooked greens; an orange; milk
- Chicken with potato; carrots, apple and cabbage slaw; milk
- Fish with sweet potato; broccoli; green salad; a pear; milk
- Stir fry with tofu, vegetables, and noodles

Evening Snack

- Cheese and fruit
- Small bowl of cereal with nuts and fruit
- An egg and carrot sticks, or a sandwich

Activity and Exercise

- Exercise is good for you and your baby. It can help ease aches and pains, improve circulation, and prepare you for a healthy delivery.
- Try to get 30 minutes of activity every day, even if it is just walking to a nearby park.
- It is usually safe to keep doing your normal exercise program early in pregnancy. Drink plenty of water and do not overdo it.
- It may be hard to exercise without discomfort later in pregnancy. Do what is comfortable without excess strain. Check with your pregnancy care provider for the best activities if you have any concerns.
- It is safe to continue sexual activity.
- Avoid hot tubs and saunas.
- Wear gloves when gardening, and wash your hands afterward.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

Women's Health Care
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