

## Nutrition 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 a healthy diet is important during pregnancy.*

### Why do I need to watch what I eat during pregnancy?

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

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



*It is important to eat a healthy diet, for both you and your baby.*

### How much weight gain is normal during pregnancy?

We usually advise a slow, steady weight gain during pregnancy. For a woman who starts pregnancy at a normal weight, gaining 25 to 35 pounds is ideal. See the chart on page 2 for expected weight gain 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 having *multiples* (twins, triplets, or more), your weight gain goal will be different. Your pregnancy care provider or dietitian can adjust your weight gain guidelines for your pregnancy.

If you gain weight too quickly, you may need to adjust how and what you eat to slow your weight gain:

- Choose water over beverages with calories. This can help decrease your calorie intake over the day.
- Add protein and fat to snacks. This will help you feel full longer so that you do not need to snack as much.

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

<b>BMI Before Pregnancy</b>	<b>BMI (kg/m<sup>2</sup>)</b>	<b>Total Weight Gain</b>	<b>Rate of Weight Gain for 2nd and 3rd Trimesters</b>
Underweight	Lower than 18.5	28 to 40 pounds	1 to 1.3 pounds a week
Normal weight	18.5 to 24.9	25 to 35 pounds	0.8 to 1 pounds a week
Overweight	25.0 to 29.9	15 to 25 pounds	0.5 to 0.7 pounds a week
Obese	30.0 or higher	11 to 20 pounds	0.4 to 0.6 pounds a 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](http://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 more calories a day than you ate before pregnancy.

If you are expecting more than 1 baby, your calorie needs will be different. Please ask your pregnancy care provider or dietitian for guidelines.

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

We advise you to:

- Eat foods that are rich in nutrients.
- Include many different foods in your diet.
- 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.

This table gives some tips about what to eat every day to keep your diet varied and healthy.

<b>Food Group</b>	<b>How Much to Eat Each Day</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Grains</b>	5 to 7 oz.	1 ounce = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 slice of bread</li> <li>• 1 oz. cold cereal</li> <li>• ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, or hot cereal</li> <li>• 1 tortilla (6 inch)</li> </ul>
<b>Vegetables</b>	3 cups or more	1 cup = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 cup raw or cooked vegetables</li> <li>• 2 cups raw leafy greens</li> </ul>
<b>Fruit</b>	2 cups or more	1 cup = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 cup fresh, cooked, canned fruit</li> <li>• 1 medium piece of fresh fruit</li> <li>• ½ cup dried fruit</li> </ul>
<b>Dairy</b>	3 cups	1 cup = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 cup (8 oz.) milk or yogurt</li> <li>• 1½ ounces cheese</li> </ul>
<b>Protein</b>	5 to 6 oz.	1 ounce = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 egg</li> <li>• 1 tablespoon peanut butter</li> <li>• ½ ounce nuts</li> <li>• ½ cup cooked beans</li> <li>• 1 oz. fish, meat, or poultry</li> </ul>

*Adapted from Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Nutrition Care Manual, accessed 05/2018.*

## **Nutrients in Food**

### **Carbohydrates**

For a healthy pregnancy, about half of your calories should come from complex carbohydrate foods. These include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, milk, and yogurt.

- 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.

### **Protein**

- Good sources of protein include lean meat, chicken, turkey, fish, low-fat dairy products, eggs, cheese, beans (legumes), tofu, nuts, and natural peanut butter or other nut butters.
- If you do not want to eat fish, try eating other dietary sources of DHA (*docosahexaenoic acid*). This fatty acid is found in cold-water fish, but also in walnuts, wheat germ, and omega-3 enriched eggs.

**Please read the Food Safety section that starts on page 6 for more information about how to select and prepare protein foods.**

### **Fats**

Your baby needs healthy fats during pregnancy and breastfeeding. They are important for brain development. Some healthy sources are:

- Oils: olive, avocado, canola, peanut, sesame
- Flax and chia seeds
- Avocado
- Nuts and seeds

Read food labels. Avoid foods that contain *hydrogenated* or *partially hydrogenated* fat. These contain unhealthy *trans fat*.

### **Fluids**

- Drink plenty of water so that you never feel thirsty. If you are drinking enough water, your urine will be light in color. Many pregnant women carry a water bottle with them to make sure that they drink enough.
- 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.

### **Do I need to take vitamins?**

A prenatal vitamin can help you and your baby get 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 mcg to 250 mcg is advised in pregnancy)

**If you follow a vegan diet**, add these supplements to the list above:

- 2.0 mg of vitamin B12
- 300 mg *choline bitartrate*, which you can buy at most stores that sell vitamins and supplements
- 500 mg calcium supplement, taken 2 times a day

### **Calcium**

You need calcium during pregnancy for bone health and other vital functions. The foods that are highest in calcium are milk, cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese, and nut milks that have calcium added. Other foods such as broccoli, kale, seafood, tofu, sesame seeds, white beans, and almonds provide calcium in smaller amounts.

If you cannot eat at least 4 servings of high-calcium foods every day, talk with your provider about whether you need a calcium supplement. You need about 1,200 to 1,500 mg of calcium a day.

### **Vitamin D3**

While you are pregnant, you need plenty of vitamin D3 (*cholecalciferol*) to help your baby's bones grow strong. Your body produces some vitamin D when sunlight touches your bare skin, but each person's skin absorbs sunlight differently. Some people may wear clothing that covers most of their skin. Others may live in areas where there is not very much sunlight.

Talk with your OB provider about your vitamin D intake. Ask about the benefits of taking a vitamin D3 supplement.

### **Iron**

Your body uses iron to keep your blood healthy and to carry oxygen to your cells. During pregnancy, the amount of blood in your body increases by about half (50%). This means you need a lot of iron while you are pregnant.

Your baby needs iron for their blood, too. Babies need to store up enough iron to last for 6 months after birth.

To meet your body's needs and for your growing baby's health, you should eat about 30 mg of iron a day during pregnancy. You can get iron by eating red meats, poultry, fish, eggs, enriched breads, beans, some nuts and seeds, and some leafy greens. Your provider will check your iron level through blood tests and suggest an extra iron supplement, if needed.

### **Tips:**

- Vitamin C helps your body absorb iron. Eat foods with high vitamin C content at the same time you eat your iron-rich foods or when you take your iron supplement.
- The tannins in black, green, and white tea can block iron absorption. Avoid drinking tea when you are eating iron-rich foods or taking an iron supplement.

### **Folic Acid**

Folic acid is needed to make new blood cells and to keep blood cells healthy. Growing babies use folic acid to make their blood, nervous system, and other vital organs.

Foods that are rich in folic acid are dark green vegetables, legumes, whole grains, and peanuts. Eat foods that are high in folic acid as well as taking your prenatal vitamin.

### **Choline**

Choline is an important nutrient during pregnancy. It helps your baby's brain develop. Food sources of choline include whole eggs, beef, chicken, fish, kidney beans, milk, potatoes, and broccoli. If you can, eat 1 to 2 eggs a day, for both the protein and the choline content.

### **Food Safety**

**When in doubt, throw it out!** Keep you and your baby healthy.

During pregnancy, you have a higher chance of getting infections and illnesses from certain foods.

To avoid becoming ill:

- 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. This includes “pre-washed” salad greens and whole melons.
- 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.
- Put food in the refrigerator right after cooking and serving.
- Do **not** eat cooked food or 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,” between 40°F to 140°F (4.4°C to 60°C). Bacteria grow easily in this range of temperatures.

- Avoid eating foods from salad bars, deli counters, buffets, sidewalk vendors, and food carts.

### **Cooking Temperatures**

**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)

### **Foods to Avoid**

**Avoid eating these foods.** They carry a higher risk for foodborne illness:

- Unpasteurized cheese, milk, and juice. Soft cheeses, like feta, Brie, Gorgonzola, Camembert, and queso fresco are often unpasteurized. Read labels carefully.
- Refrigerated smoked seafood unless it is a part of a cooked dish.
- Foods made with raw or undercooked eggs, like cookie dough, Caesar salad dressing, and homemade ice cream.

To learn more about food safety while you are pregnant, visit [www.foodsafety.gov/risk/pregnant/index.html](http://www.foodsafety.gov/risk/pregnant/index.html).

### **Listeria**

*Listeria* is a harmful bacteria that can grow in your refrigerator at temperatures where most other bacteria in food cannot grow. It causes an illness called *listeriosis*. It can be present in cold, ready-to-eat foods, unpasteurized milk and milk products, and raw vegetables. To lower your risk of a listeria infection, follow the “Foods to Avoid” list above.

### **Methylmercury in Fish**

Methylmercury is a metal that is found in certain fish. At high levels, it can harm an unborn baby or a young child’s developing nervous system. To avoid this metal:

- Do **not** eat large fish that live a long time, such as shark, tilefish, king, mackerel, and swordfish.
- You can eat up to 12 ounces a week of low-mercury fish and shellfish. These include shrimp, light canned tuna, salmon, pollock, and catfish.

To learn more, ask your provider for the “Healthy Fish Guide.” The guide is also on the Washington State Department of Health website: [www.doh.wa.gov/communityandenvironment/food/fish/healthyfishguide.aspx](http://www.doh.wa.gov/communityandenvironment/food/fish/healthyfishguide.aspx).

### **Biotoxins in Shellfish**

Eating shellfish that lived in contaminated waters can cause serious illness or death. Before you eat fish, crab, lobster, or other shellfish, check to make sure the waters it lived in are safe. To learn more:

- Visit the Washington State Department of Health website: <https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/eh/maps/biotoxin/biotoxin.html>
- Call the Shellfish Safety Hotline: 800.562.5632

### **Toxoplasma**

*Toxoplasma* is a parasite that causes *toxoplasmosis*. This illness can be hard to detect because you may not have any symptoms. The parasite can be found in raw and undercooked meat, unwashed fruits and vegetables, soil, dirty cat litter boxes, and outdoor areas where cat feces can be found.

To avoid toxoplasma:

- If you have a cat, have someone else change the litter box. If you have to clean it, wash your hands well with soap and water afterward.
- Wear gloves if you garden or handle sand from a sandbox. Wash your hands well afterward.
- Do **not** get a new cat while you are pregnant.

### **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 give in to food cravings once in a while. Be aware of your serving sizes of high-calorie foods such as 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 condition is called *pica*. Tell your pregnancy care provider if you are craving or eating anything that is not food.



## **Premature Fullness**

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

## **Constipation**

Constipation is when your bowels move less often and your stool are more firm. Symptoms include abdominal discomfort, bloating, swelling, and needing to strain when having a bowel movement.

When you are pregnant, constipation can make problems like nausea and premature fullness feel worse. To reduce constipation:

- Drink more fluids
- Eat foods that are high in fiber
- Get exercise – walking after breakfast is a great way to help food move through your bowels

If increasing fiber and fluids in your diet, along with regular exercise, doesn't help, talk with your pregnancy care provider.

## **Heartburn**

Heartburn symptoms include a burning feeling or pain in your chest after eating. It can last a few minutes or several hours.

If you have heartburn, try making these dietary changes to ease the discomfort:

- Eat 5 to 6 small meals during the day instead of 3 large meals.
- Avoid spicy foods, citrus fruits, tomatoes, fried foods, carbonated drinks, and other foods that can trigger heartburn.
- Eat less fatty food.
- Take your time when eating.
- Do not eat right before going to bed or lying down.

Talk with your pregnancy provider:

- If you keep having heartburn
- **Before** taking an antacid

## **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. Do not overdo it and remember to drink plenty of water.
- It may be hard to exercise without discomfort later in pregnancy. Do what is comfortable without too much strain. Check with your pregnancy care provider for the best activities if you have any concerns.
- It is safe to have sex.
- Avoid hot tubs and saunas.

## **Sample Meals**

Here are some ideas for what to eat for your 5 to 6 meals a day. Plan to include carbohydrates, protein, and fat in all of your meals. Drink fluids throughout the day.

### **Breakfast Ideas**

- Omelette or scramble with vegetables, whole grain toast or roasted potatoes, and fruit
- 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**

See snack ideas below.

### **Lunch Ideas**

- Large salad with greens, protein (chicken, tofu, beans, egg, or cheese), vegetables, avocado, seeds or nuts, and full-fat dressing
- Peanut butter and jelly sandwich on whole grain bread, full or low-fat yogurt, banana
- Rice and beans with cheese and tomatoes, apple, small green salad
- Turkey wrap with lettuce and vegetables on whole grain wrap, apple

### **Mid-afternoon Snack**

See snack ideas on the next page.

### **Dinner**

- Tortilla with rice, beans, cheese, bell pepper, and onion; melon cubes
- Lean beef with pasta and vegetables or spaghetti with meat sauce; orange

- Chicken, potato, slaw made with carrot, apple, and cabbage
- Fish, sweet potato, broccoli, green salad, pear
- Stir-fry with tofu, vegetables, and noodles

### Evening Snack

See snack ideas below.

### Snack Ideas

When you make yourself a snack, choose 1 protein, 1 fruit or starch, and 1 vegetable from the table below. Mix and match!

Protein	Fruit or Starch	Vegetables
Cheese	Fruit (apple, banana, peach, berries)	Carrot sticks or baby carrots
Peanut or other nut butter	Crackers	Cucumber slices
Well-cooked egg	Dry cereal	Sweet peppers
Cottage cheese	Bread	Jicama sticks
Nuts	Dried fruit	Broccoli florets
Hummus		Cauliflower florets
		Cherry tomatoes

### What to Drink

- Be sure to drink plenty of water.
- You can also choose to drink milk for the added calcium and protein. You can try soy or nut milk instead of cow’s milk – look for products that are fortified with calcium and vitamin D.
- Limit how much juice and soda you drink. Aim for 1 serving (8 oz.) or less a day.
- It is OK to drink coffee and caffeinated tea during pregnancy, but try to limit yourself to 1 cup a day.

### Questions?

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

Women’s Health Care Center: 206.598.5500