

Nutrition in Pregnancy

General Guidelines for a Healthy Pregnancy Diet:

A healthy balanced diet is important whether a woman is pregnant or not. Making sure that you are getting plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains is vital. Low-fat dairy products are excellent for calcium intake, and varied sources of protein is important (meat, fish, eggs, beans and dried peas).

In pregnancy, a moderate increase in the caloric intake is necessary to balance the amount of energy a woman's body expends on growing a baby. This increase in caloric intake should be from nutritious foods rather than candy, soda, or fast food whenever possible. Total weight gain goals are listed below based on pre-pregnancy Body Mass Index (BMI), which is your weight in kilograms divided by your height in meters, squared:

- BMI <18.5 kg/m² (underweight) — weight gain 28 to 40 lbs
- BMI 18.5 to 24.9 kg/m² (normal weight) — weight gain 25 to 35 lbs
- BMI 25.0 to 29.9 kg/m² (overweight) — weight gain 15 to 25 lbs
- BMI ≥30.0 kg/m² (obese) — weight gain 11 to 20 lbs

In general, a well-balanced diet with healthy snacks interspersed with occasional treats, as well as plenty of water is the goal for all pregnant women. Excess weight gain during pregnancy has been linked to childhood obesity, as well difficulty in returning to pre-pregnancy weight.

What to Avoid in Pregnancy:

Listening to all the fads and personal opinions about what to avoid can make a person crazy, however, there are some foods that are important to avoid, especially in pregnancy. Always using good kitchen hygiene is also important (washing hands, washing fruits/vegetables prior to eating, cleaning cutting boards thoroughly after cutting raw meats, poultry, and fish with hot soapy water and/or a dilute bleach mixture). Also, make sure to put left-over food away immediately into the refrigerator and reheat thoroughly.

- Anything unpasteurized (milk, fruit/vegetable juices, some soft cheeses, cider)
- Meats, fish*, and poultry (including eggs) that are not fully cooked
- Raw sprouts (alfalfa, clover, mung bean, etc.)
- Deli meat (unless heated in microwave or oven to steaming hot), excess nitrates (hotdogs, pepperoni, etc.)
- Sugar substitutes (i.e. diet soda, saccharine, etc.)
- Excess caffeine (up to 200 mg per day has NOT been linked to issues)
- Herbal supplements and teas should be reviewed by your physician prior to taking. Often, herbal supplements are not subject to FDA regulations. Consult our website for a list of herbs to avoid during pregnancy.

Why Avoid Certain Foods in Pregnancy?

Certain food borne illnesses can cause infections in the mother than can pass through the placenta and cause an infection within the uterus that can lead to congenital diseases, miscarriage, preterm delivery and infections in the newborn that can be life threatening.

- Toxoplasmosis — Toxoplasmosis is caused by ingestion of undercooked or cured meat, soil-contaminated fruit or vegetables, and contaminated unfiltered water.
- *Listeria monocytogenes* — Listeria is a common low-level contaminant of both processed and unprocessed foods of plant and animal origin, but hot cooked foods are not a vehicle of Listeria transmission. It is most commonly associated with processed/delicatessen meats, hot dogs, soft cheeses, smoked seafood, meat spreads, and paté. It is also carried on the skin of fruit, especially from South America. Make sure to wash all fruit well, including the skin prior to cutting or peeling.
- Brucellosis — Brucellosis is caused by ingestion of contaminated food such as raw milk, cheeses made from unpasteurized (raw) milk, or raw meat.

What to do about fish?

Fish has gotten a bad reputation in the past, but is actually an excellent source of omega fatty acids that are essential for fetal brain development. Excess mercury levels are still an important consideration when ingesting fish and shellfish, particularly in Vermont and New York. Mercury levels in Lake Champlain and its tributaries are too high to safely ingest fish obtained from these locations. Also, Shark, Swordfish, King Mackerel, and Tilefish are not safe given the high levels of mercury found in them. Small white fish and shellfish, such as Tilapia, canned 'light' Tuna, Salmon, Scallops, Pollock, Catfish, Shrimp, Cod, Clams, Crab, Sardines, Haddock, Halibut, Lobster, Flounder, and Ocean Perch are all considered safe to eat up to 12 ounces (two average meals) a week.

Important Information for Vegetarians and Vegans:

We recommend a nutritional consultation, especially for woman who exclude all animal products. Vegetable based diets may not provide adequate amounts of essential amino acids, iron, trace minerals, vitamin B12, vitamin D, calcium, or complex lipids for normal fetal development. It is also difficult achieve the high bulk of food required to meet energy requirements, particularly with a vegan diet.

Informational Websites:

1. <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html>
2. http://www.uptodate.com/contents/patient-information-nutrition-before-and-during-pregnancy-the-basics?source=see_link
3. <http://www.acog.org/-/media/For%20Patients/faq001.ashx>
4. <http://www.americanpregnancy.org/pregnancyhealth/>