

Eating well during pregnancy



Eating right is a big part of prenatal self-care. You need to eat wisely for your baby's health and yours, too.

You need to eat right during these periods:

- Before you get pregnant.
- While you are pregnant.
- After delivery. This is most important if you breastfeed your baby.



Eating healthy means getting enough:

- Water
- Protein
- Carbohydrates
- Fat
- Vitamins
- Minerals
- Fiber

All are important nutrients. Nutrients are what make foods good for you.

During pregnancy, you need more of many nutrients.

That's because:

- Your body produces more blood and body fluids.
- Your uterus and other body tissues grow and expand.
- The baby has to grow and develop.
- Low nutrient levels can cause a low birth weight for your baby.
- Low nutrient levels can cause you and the baby other health problems.
- Your body must get ready to breastfeed.

These tips will help you eat healthy and feel good.

- Don't diet during pregnancy. Reach your healthy body weight before you get pregnant. Dieting can keep you from getting the right nutrients.
- Choose foods rich in nutrients. Limit or don't have ones that can cause problems for your baby.
- Drink 8 to 12 cups of fluids (mostly water) every day.
- Eat foods that have iron.
- Eat foods that have folic acid.
- Take prenatal vitamins. Your health care provider can give you a prescription for them. Your health insurance plan may cover their cost if your doctor prescribes them. Vitamins don't take the place of healthy foods. But they can help you get the extra vitamins and minerals that you need during pregnancy. Folic acid and iron are examples.
- Talk to your health care provider about getting omega-3 fatty acids from foods, such as salmon, flaxseed oil and vitamins.



CHOOSE FOODS RICH IN NUTRIENTS

Grains: Eat 8 ounces every day. 1 oz. is about 1 slice of bread, about 1 cup of breakfast cereal, or 1/2 cup of cooked rice, cereal, or pasta.

Choose whole-grain cereals, breads, crackers, rice, or pasta more often. When you don't, choose grains that have folic acid added.

Fruits: Eat 2 cups every day.

1 cup = 1 medium piece of fruit, 1 cup chopped fruit, or 1 cup fruit juice.

- Eat a variety of fruit.
- Choose fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruit. Go easy on fruit juices.

Vegetables: Eat at least 3 cups every day. 1 cup = 2 cups raw leafy vegetables, 1 cup other vegetables (raw or cooked) or 1 cup vegetable juice.

- Eat dark-green veggies like broccoli, spinach, and other dark leafy greens.
- Eat orange vegetables like carrots and sweet potatoes.
- Eat dry beans and peas like pinto beans, kidney beans, and lentils.

Dairy: Get 3 cups every day. 1 cup = 1 cup of milk or yogurt, 1-1/2 oz. hard cheese, or 1 oz. processed cheese.

- Go low-fat or fat-free when you choose milk, yogurt, and other milk products.
- If you don't drink milk, choose lactose-free products or other calcium sources, such as fortified foods and beverages.

Protein: Eat 7 oz. every day. 1 oz. protein = 1 oz. poultry, seafood or meat, 1/4 cup cooked beans, 1 egg, 1/2 cup tofu, 1/3 cup nuts, or 1 tablespoon peanut butter.

- Choose low-fat or lean poultry, etc.
- Bake it, broil it, or grill it.
- Vary your protein choices. Choose more fish, beans, peas, nuts, and seeds.





ITEMS TO LIMIT OR AVOID

- Avoid or limit caffeine to 200 mg a day, or ask your doctor how much caffeine you can have in a day. Teas without caffeine are safe. You can find these in the supermarket. But beware of certain herbal or “natural” teas. Sometimes they contain things that can be harmful. Examples of these things: sassafras, mistletoe, bittersweet, and spotted hemlock. These teas are usually found in health food stores. Always read the label to find out what you are buying!
- Do not drink alcoholic beverages. It is not known if any or how much alcohol is safe during pregnancy. It is better to not drink any at all.
- Don’t use saccharin. This is sugar substitute. Follow your health care provider’s advice for other ones, too. Examples: Nutrasweet and Splenda.
- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables before you eat them. Don’t eat raw alfalfa sprouts. Don’t eat raw or rare meat. Wash your hands after you handle raw meat.
- Some foods have bacteria that can cause an infection called listeriosis. This can cause harm to the baby. How can you avoid this? Don’t have foods that are unpasteurized. Examples are soft cheeses like feta and Brie. If you eat hot dogs, luncheon meats, or deli meats, heat them first.
- Don’t eat fish that has a lot of mercury. Examples: shark, swordfish, tile fish, and king mackerel. Limit “white” tuna fish, too. Ask your health care provider what kind of fish to eat and how much.
- Tell your health care provider if you crave laundry starch, clay, or dirt. Eating these things can harm you and the baby.





WEIGHT GAIN AND PREGNANCY

Talk to your health care provider about weight gain. The amount you should gain depends on:

- Your height and what you weighed before you got pregnant
- Your special pregnancy needs
- Your ethnic and family background

Is your body weight about right for your build? If so, your best weight gain is about 25 to 35 pounds.

- Petite, small-boned women should gain about 25 pounds.
- Medium-built women should gain about 30 pounds.
- Larger, bigger-boned women should gain about 35 pounds.

How fast should you gain weight? If you start your pregnancy with a healthy body weight:

- Gain 3 to 4 pounds in the first trimester.
- Gain 12 to 14 pounds in the second trimester. That’s about a pound a week.
- Gain 8 to 10 pounds in the third trimester. Third trimester breakdown: During months 7 and 8, gain about a pound a week. During month 9, gain only a pound or two—or nothing at all.

{**Note:** It is rare to match this formula for weight gain exactly. It’s okay to vary a little. But try to keep your weight gain steady.}

- If you were underweight before you got pregnant, you should gain between 28 and 40 pounds.
- If you are overweight, you should gain about 15 to 25 pounds.
- If you are obese, you should gain about 11 to 20 pounds.
- Pregnancy is never a time to lose weight, though. It’s not a time to stay the same weight, either. That’s because your baby can’t live on stored fat alone.
- How much weight you should gain is up to your health care provider.

If you are carrying more than one baby:

- Your health care provider will tell you your ideal weight gain.
- Your weight will increase to about 35 to 45 pounds for twins. It will be more if you are having more than two babies!

Pregnancy Weight Gain	
Weight Gain (at birth)	Pounds
Baby’s weight	7 to 8
Uterus increase	2
Amniotic sac & amniotic fluid	2
Placenta	2
More blood in your body	3 to 5
More fluid in your tissues	3 to 5
Breast increase	1 to 3
Fat and protein stored in your body	4 to 7
Total Weight Gain:	24 to 34