

Nutrition for a Healthy Pregnancy

A Guide to Eating



Now that you are expecting, it is especially important to eat well. Not only are you eating for your own health, but for the health of your unborn baby. Eating a variety of nutritious foods in the right amounts will ensure you get all the nutrients you and your baby need for a healthy pregnancy and healthy development.



Healthy Eating - The Basics

Healthy Eating During Pregnancy

3 well-balanced meals/day and healthy snacks

Fruits and Vegetables: 7 to 8 per day

Grain Products/Starches: 6 to 7 servings per day

Meats and Meat Alternatives: 2 to 3 servings per day

Milk and Milk Products: 3 to 4 servings per day.

Healthy eating in pregnancy includes three meals per day plus healthy snacks.

Choose a wide variety of foods to help you get all the nutrients you need.

- **Fruits and vegetables:**

7 to 8 each day. Important sources of vitamins and fibre. You can buy these fresh, frozen, canned, or dried. A serving is equivalent to half a cup or one small fruit.

- **Grain Products/ Starches:** 6 to 7 each day. Essential for fibre and vitamins such as B-vitamins. It is important to choose whole-grain options. A serving is one slice of bread or half a cup of pasta/potatoes.

- **Meats and Alternatives:**

2 to 3 each day. Important for protein and essential vitamins and minerals such as B12 and iron. These include lean meats, fish, eggs, nuts and legumes (such as beans). A serving is the size of a deck of cards (meat) or 2 eggs. Eggs are a very good source of choline, which is a nutrient important for the baby's development.

- **Milk and Milk Products:** 3 to 4 servings each day. These include



milk, cheese and yogurt, which contain calcium, Vitamin D and protein. Aim for a glass of milk with every meal. A serving is 250mL milk, 1.5 ounces of cheese or $\frac{3}{4}$ -cup yogurt. Fortified soy beverage is an alternative to milk products.

Snacking

Snacking between meals can be a healthy part of pregnancy. Remember to eat when you are hungry, and keep healthy foods on hand to make it easier for you to make good food choices. The following table provides some nutritious snack ideas:

Healthy snack Ideas

Apple with 1-2 tbsp peanut butter

Raw veggies with hummus

1.5 ounces cheese with whole grain crackers

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup plain yogurt or cottage cheese topped with fruit

$\frac{1}{2}$ sandwich on whole wheat bread (try egg salad or peanut butter and jam)

2 tbsp of nuts with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dried fruit



Nausea and Vomiting (Pregnancy Sickness)

Pregnancy sickness is experienced by about 8 of 10 women, however, the onset, duration, and severity varies widely. The cause is unknown, but it is thought to be connected to hormones.

Morning sickness will not threaten your baby's well-being as long as you are able to keep some food down, and drink plenty of fluids. Eat a balanced diet if you can, but if you are feeling very sick, eat whatever you can cope with.

If you are vomiting many times a day, or are unable to eat and drink without vomiting, and are losing weight, see your doctor immediately.

Eat small, frequent meals to help curb morning sickness

Tips for Controlling Morning Sickness:

- If you feel sick in the morning, nibble dry whole grain toast or wholegrain crackers when you wake up. Ask your partner to bring you something even before you get out of bed. Eat the rest of your breakfast later in the morning.
- Eat small, frequent meals. While you may not feel like eating, it is important to eat regularly to manage nausea.
- Try to pay attention to which foods make your symptoms worse. Rich, fried, fatty or highly spiced foods are common culprits.
- Most importantly, keep well hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids.



Weight Gain

Weight gain during pregnancy is necessary and healthy to support the growth of the baby (fetus and placenta). Weight gain is also needed for changes in your body such as increased volume of blood, larger breasts, and some fat storage.

The amount of weight you should gain during your pregnancy depends on your Body Mass Index (BMI) before pregnancy. BMI is a way to calculate the best weight range for a person's height. Your healthcare provider can help you calculate your BMI. If you know an accurate height and weight, you can do it yourself at: www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/. More weight is gained in the 2nd and 3rd Trimesters.

Table 1. When and how much should I gain during pregnancy?

Pre-pregnancy BMI (weight(kg)/height(m²))	Total Gain During Pregnancy lbs(kg)	Weight Gain per Week in 2nd and 3rd Trimester lbs(kg)
<18.5 (Underweight)	28-40 (13-18)	1.0 (0.5)
18.5 – 24.9 (Normal Weight)	25-35 (11-16)	1.0 (0.4)
25.0 – 29.9 (Overweight)	15-25 (7-11)	0.6 (0.3)
≥30 (Obese)	11-20 (5-9)	0.5 (0.2)

How many Calories do I Need?

If your pre-pregnancy weight was in the normal range (BMI 18.5-24.9), you need:

- 300 extra calories a day in your **second trimester**
- 450 extra calories a day in your **third trimester**

A healthy weight gain (see Table 1) is the best way to know that you are getting the right amount of calories. If you were underweight at conception, you may need additional calories. If you were overweight, you may need fewer calories for optimal weight gain.

To help you eat healthy and control your appetite, try these tips:



control your appetite, try these tips:

- Eat three meals every day and include a protein food with each meal. Balanced meals help you feel full longer.
- Include high-fibre foods like whole grains, fruits and vegetables.
- Drink plenty of water and be physically active.
- Keep nutritious foods on hand for healthy snacking.

Supplements

It is essential that a prenatal multivitamin be taken every day before and during pregnancy. Prenatal vitamins contain the right quantities of beneficial vitamins and minerals, such as folic acid.

All women should take a prenatal vitamin every day, both before and during pregnancy.

Myth or Fact:

Now that you are pregnant, you need to eat for two.

Answer: False

An extra healthy snack and a glass of milk may be the only additional food you need during pregnancy.

Folic acid is a vitamin that helps prevent neural tube birth defects (NTDs) which occur when the spinal cord, brain, or skull do not develop properly in the third and fourth week of pregnancy.



The risk of having a baby with NTDs is lower among women who took a daily vitamin with folic acid (0.4-1.0mg) before they became pregnant and during the early weeks of pregnancy. Because most women do not even know they are pregnant during this early stage, all women of childbearing age, whether or not they plan to become pregnant should be taking a multivitamin with folic acid.

Among other nutrients, a prenatal vitamin also contains iron, an important component of red blood cells. Pregnant women are at risk of having low iron and becoming anemic because of the large volume of blood cells needed to support the pregnancy.

Taking 1000 IU of Vitamin D and 800 mg DHA/EPA (Omega 3) is also recommended

If you are a vegan or strict vegetarian, you may be missing some nutrients. A registered dietitian can help you ensure you are getting everything you need for a healthy pregnancy.

Food Safety

Pregnant women are at an increased risk of getting sick from a food-borne illness like listeria or salmonella. These illnesses can cause serious health problems for your baby.

It is extremely important to follow proper food safety behaviours:

- Wash your hands often, especially before you eat or prepare food.
- Avoid cross-contamination of foods (e.g., immediately wash any

- board and knife used for preparing raw meat)
- Cook poultry, egg dishes and ground meats to 74°C
 - Cook beef and pork to 71°C

Foods to Avoid or Limit During Pregnancy

Cheese: You can eat most cheeses when you are pregnant, and cheese is a great source of calcium. Some cheeses are more likely to grow harmful bacteria such as listeria.

Although the risk is small, the following are potentially unsafe cheeses during pregnancy:

- Mould-ripened soft cheese: brie, camembert, and chèvre
- Blue-veined cheeses: Danish blue, stilton, gorgonzola
- Soft, unpasteurized cheese: goat's and sheep's cheese

Raw or Undercooked Meat, Eggs, or Fish: All are possible sources of bacteria such as salmonella that can harm your unborn baby. When cooking meat and eggs, make sure they are cooked thoroughly or warmed until piping hot (74 °C or 165 °F). Cold sandwich meat (deli meat) must be heated thoroughly. Avoid raw seafood such as oysters and sushi. Avoid homemade Caesar salad dressing made with raw eggs. Avoid meat spreads, pate, and smoked salmon that needs to be refrigerated.

Liver and liver products: (such as pâté or liver sausage) should be avoided as they may contain large amounts of vitamin A. Too much of this could be harmful to your developing baby.

Fruits and Vegetables: avoid eating raw sprouts (especially alfalfa sprouts) when you are pregnant. You should also avoid drinking unpasteurized juices and smoothies (including unpasteurized apple cider), unless heated to a boil.

Herbal Teas: there are some herbal teas that you should not drink when you are pregnant. Teas to avoid include chamomile, aloe, coltsfoot, juniper berries, pennyroyal, buckthorn bark, comfrey, labrador, saffras, duck roots, lobelia and senna leaves.

*If you drink herbal teas, make sure they do not replace more nutritious drinks such as milk. This may reduce calcium intake.

What about Fish?

Many women avoid eating fish altogether during pregnancy as there are concerns over contaminants such as mercury. In reality, most varieties of fish sold in Canada are low in these contaminants. Fish also provide important nutrients for a healthy pregnancy, such as omega-3 fats. Omega-3 fats have been linked to better blood flow to the placenta and baby, and they support good brain and nervous system development in the baby.

Choose canned “*light*” tuna rather than “*white*” tuna (Albacore). Light tuna contains species that are low in mercury and are safe during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

During pregnancy, women should aim to have 150 grams (5 ounces) of cooked fish each week. Fish that provide omega-3 fats and are low in mercury include:

- Salmon (wild, Atlantic, or sockeye)
- Rainbow Trout
- Mackerel
- Halibut
- Herring
- Haddock
- Canned “light” tuna



There are some fish that contain higher levels of mercury. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should limit these fish to no more than 150 grams (5 ounces) per month. These include:

- Tuna (fresh, frozen, or Albacore “white” canned tuna)
- Shark
- Swordfish
- Marlin
- Orange Roughy

No amount of alcohol or cannabis is safe during pregnancy.

Alcohol and

Alcohol and do not mix. safe level of Cannabis pregnancy a toxin and your baby.



Cannabis:

pregnancy There is no alcohol or during as alcohol is can hurt