

**Weight Gain During Pregnancy**

Gaining the right amount of weight during pregnancy by eating a health, balanced diet is a good sign that your baby is getting all the nutrients he or she needs and is growing at a healthy rate. It is not necessary to "eat for two" during your pregnancy. It's true that you need extra calories from nutrient-rich foods to help your baby grow, but you generally need to consume only 300 more calories than you did before you became pregnant to meet the needs of your growing baby.

Women gain very different amounts of weight in pregnancy. There is no right amount of weight gain. The important point is to gain adequately so that your baby and you receive adequate nutrition and so that you feel well during the pregnancy. Ask your midwife how much weight you should gain during pregnancy.

Although weight gain varies widely, there are some averages. A woman of average weight before pregnancy will usually gain about 25 to 35 pounds during pregnancy. Underweight women will gain up to 40 pounds during pregnancy. Overweight women will often gain less, about 15-25 pounds during pregnancy. You may need to gain more or less weight, depending on what your midwife recommends. In general, you should gain about 2 to 4 pounds during your first three months of pregnancy and 1 pound a week for the remainder of your pregnancy.

**Where Does the Extra Weight Go?**

Baby 7-11 pounds

Placenta 2-3 pounds

Amniotic fluid 2-3 pounds

Breast tissue 2-3 pounds

Blood supply 4 pounds

Fat stores for delivery and breastfeeding 5-9 pounds

Uterus increase 2-5 pounds

Total 25-40 pounds

**Is It Safe to Lose Weight During Pregnancy?**

No. It is never safe to lose weight during pregnancy -- both you and your baby need the proper nutrients in order to be healthy.

**How Can I Gain the Appropriate Amount of Weight During Pregnancy?**

If your midwife recommends gaining more weight during pregnancy, here are some suggestions

* Eat 5-6 small, frequent meals every day.
* Keep quick, easy snacks on hand, such as nuts, raisins, cheese and crackers, dried fruit, and ice cream/yogurt.
* Spread peanut butter on toast, crackers, apples, bananas, or celery. One tablespoon of creamy peanut butter will provide about 100 calories and seven grams of protein.
* Add non-fat powdered milk to foods such as mashed potatoes, scrambled eggs, and hot cereal.
* Add condiments to your meal, such as butter or margarine, cream cheese, gravy, sour cream and cheese.

**What Should I Do If I Feel I Am Gaining Too Much Weight?**

Talk with your midwife about this concern. DO NOT try to lose weight. It is never safe to lose weight during pregnancy. be sure to eat a variety of foods to get all the nutrients you and your baby need. Here are some tips to slow your weight gain:

* Limit eating out. When eating out, choose lower fat items such as broiled chicken breast sandwich with tomato and lettuce (no sauce or mayonnaise), side salad with low-fat dressing, plain bagels or a plain baked potato. Avoid fried foods such as French fries, mozzarella sticks, and breaded chicken patties.
* Avoid whole milk products. Using skim, 1% or 2% milk will greatly reduce the amount of calories and fat you eat. Also choose low-fat or fat-free dairy.
* Limit sweet or sugar drinks. Sweetened drinks such as soft drinks, fruit punch, fruit drinks, iced tea, lemonade or powdered drink mixes provide many calories with little nutrients. Choose water, club soda, or mineral water.
* Limit sweets and high calorie snacks. Cookies, candies, donuts, cakes, syrup, honey, and potato chips provide many calories with little nutrition. Try not to eat these types of foods every day, instead try fresh fruit, low-fat yogurt, angel food cake with strawberries, or pretzels as lower calorie snack and dessert choices.
* Use fats in moderation. Fats include cooking oils, margarine, butter, gravy, sauces, mayonnaise, regular salad dressings, lard, sour cream, and cream cheese. Try the lower fat substitutions that are available for these foods.
* Prepare meals using low-fat cooking methods. Frying foods in oil or butter will increase the calories and fat of that meal. Baking, broiling, or boiling are healthier, lower fat methods of cooking.

**Exercise**

Moderate exercise, as recommended by your health care provider, can help burn excess calories. Walking or swimming is generally safe, effective exercises for pregnant women. But, be sure to talk to your midwife before starting an exercise program.