

# NUTRITION DURING PREGNANCY

## COMMUNITY CARE OBSTETRICS/GYNECOLOGY

What you need to know about nutrition to have a healthy pregnancy

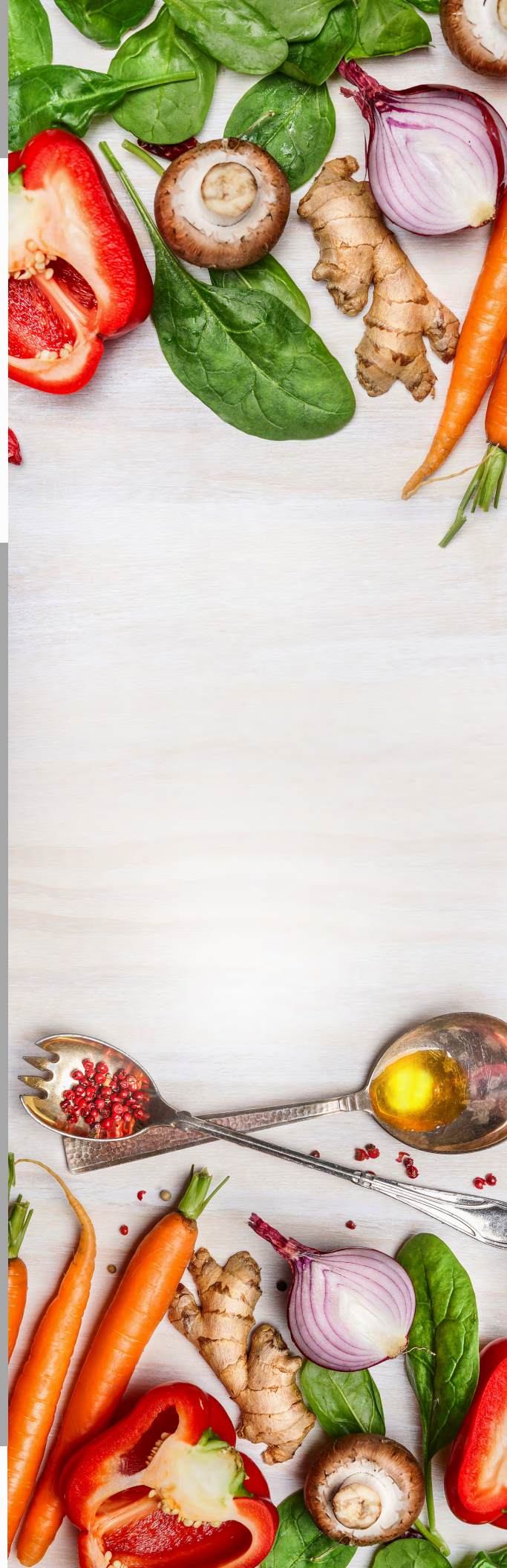
## Introduction

Your body goes through numerous physical and hormonal changes during pregnancy. The way you nourish your body during this time will affect your health and your baby's health.

You must eat a healthful, balanced diet to help ensure you stay healthy throughout your pregnancy.

The food you eat is your baby's main source of nourishment, so it's critical to consume foods that are rich in nutrients. Proper nutrition can help you promote your baby's growth and development.

By following some easy nutrition guidelines, you can be on your way to a healthy pregnancy.



# Increased Nutrients

Your body has increased nutritional needs during pregnancy. Although the old saying of "eating for two" isn't entirely correct, you do require more micro-nutrients and macro-nutrients to support you and your baby.

Micro-nutrients are dietary components, such as vitamins and minerals that are only required in small amounts.

Macro-nutrients are nutrients that provide calories or energy. These include carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. You need to consume more of each type of nutrient during your pregnancy.

## Daily Requirements for Pregnant Women:

**Calories** - Extra 300 cal in 2nd and 3rd trimesters

**Calcium** - 1200 milligrams

**Folate** - 600-800 micrograms

**Iron** - 27 milligrams

Most pregnant women can meet these increased nutritional needs by choosing a diet that includes a variety of healthy foods. A simple way to ensure you're getting all the necessary nutrients is to eat different foods from each of the food groups every day. In fact, all meals should include at least three different food groups.

Each food group has something to offer your body. For example:

- Grains are a good source of energy
- Fruits and vegetables are packed with antioxidants, fiber, and water-soluble and fat-soluble vitamins
- Meats, nuts, and legumes provide your body with protein, folate, and iron
- Dairy products are a great source of calcium and vitamin D

## What and how much to eat



Your body can't function properly if it's missing the nutrients from any of these food groups. Remember that your goal is to eat a wide variety of foods during pregnancy. Whenever possible, choose natural, low-fat foods over processed junk foods. Chips and soda, for example, contain no nutritional value.

You and your baby will benefit more from fresh fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins, such as chicken, fish, beans, or lentils. This doesn't necessarily mean that you need to avoid all of your favorite foods during pregnancy. However, you must balance them with nutritious foods so that you don't miss any important vitamins or minerals.

Including the following nutrients in your daily diet will help ensure that you satisfy your body's nutritional needs during pregnancy.

## Protein

Protein is critical for ensuring the proper growth of fetal tissue, including the brain. It also helps with breast and uterine tissue growth during pregnancy. It even plays a role in your increasing blood supply, allowing more blood to be sent to your baby.

You should eat three to four servings of protein per day. Good sources include lean beef and pork, beans, chicken, salmon, nuts, peanut butter, and cottage cheese.

## Calcium

Calcium helps build your baby's bones and regulates your body's use of fluids.

Pregnant women need at least three servings of calcium per day. In pregnant teens, the recommendation is five servings.

Good sources of calcium include milk, yogurt, cheese, cabbage, tofu, and eggs.

## Folate

Folate, also known as folic acid, plays an important part in reducing the risk of neural tube defects. These are major birth defects that affect the baby's brain and spinal cord, such as spina bifida and anencephaly. When you're pregnant, you need 600 to 800 micrograms of folate. You can get folate from these foods: liver, nuts, dried beans and lentils, eggs, nuts and peanut butter, and dark green leafy vegetables.

## Iron

Iron works with sodium, potassium, and water to increase blood flow. This helps ensure that enough oxygen is supplied to both you and your baby.

You should be getting 27 milligrams of iron per day. Good sources of iron include: dark green leafy vegetables, citrus fruits, enriched breads or cereals, lean beef, poultry, and eggs.



## Other considerations

Aside from eating well, it's important to drink at least eight 8oz glasses of water (2 liters) each day and to take prenatal vitamins. It's difficult to obtain sufficient amounts of certain nutrients, including folate and iron, from food alone.

Make sure to speak with your midwife or doctor about which prenatal vitamins you should take to ensure that you and your baby stay healthy.



## Cravings During Pregnancy

During pregnancy, many women experience aversions to particular foods, meaning they never want to eat them. They may also have cravings for at least one type of food. It's unclear why women develop food cravings or aversions during pregnancy. However, researchers believe hormones play a role.

Common cravings during pregnancy include chocolate, spicy foods, fruits, and comfort foods such as mashed potatoes and pizza. It's fine to give into these cravings sometimes, especially if you crave foods that are part of a healthy diet. However, you should try to limit your intake of junk food and processed foods.

Food aversions may only be problematic if they involve foods that are important for the baby's growth and development. Talk to your midwife or doctor if you have adverse reactions to food that you should be eating during pregnancy so they can suggest other foods or supplements to compensate for the lack of certain nutrients in your diet.

## Healthy Weight Gain During Pregnancy



Many women are concerned about weight gain during pregnancy. They fear they will gain too much weight and never return to their pre-pregnancy size. However, some weight gain is normal during pregnancy, and it shouldn't be cause for concern. The extra weight provides nourishment to the baby. Some of it is also stored for breastfeeding after the baby is born.

Women gain an average of 25-35 pounds during pregnancy. It's normal to gain less weight if you start out heavier or to gain more weight if you were underweight before pregnancy. You can speak with your midwife or doctor about the appropriate amount of weight for you to gain during your pregnancy. The chart on the next page provides some general guidelines.

# Recommended Weight Gain During Pregnancy

PRE-PREGNANCY WEIGHT CATEGORY	BODY MASS INDEX (BMI)	RECOMMENDED RANGE OF TOTAL WEIGHT GAIN (lbs)	RECOMMENDED RATES OF WEIGHT GAIN IN THE 2 <sup>ND</sup> AND 3 <sup>RD</sup> TRIMESTERS (lbs/week)
Underweight	Less than 18.5	28-40	1-1.3
Normal Weight	18.5-24.9	25-35	1
Overweight	25-29.9	15-25	0.6
Obese	30 and greater	11-20	0.5

Don't worry too much about the number on the scale! Instead of focusing on your weight, you should concentrate on eating a variety of nutritious foods. Healthy eating is incredibly important, and dieting to lose weight or prevent weight gain is harmful to you and your baby.

## Healthy Exercise

Besides eating a nutrition-focused diet, exercising during your pregnancy can help you manage your weight. Swimming, walking, yoga, and low impact aerobics are good choices. However, you should avoid any extreme sports or contact sports, such as rock climbing and basketball.

If you didn't exercise before your pregnancy, start out slowly and don't overdo it. It's also important to drink plenty of water so that you don't get dehydrated.



Make sure you're eating a balanced and nutritious diet during your pregnancy so you and your growing baby can be as healthy as possible. Think about nutritional value, and limit your intake of high-fat, high-sugar, and high-sodium foods.

### Include these:

- 3-4 servings of protein per day
- 6 or more servings of whole grains per day
- 5+ servings of fruits and vegetables per day
- 3+ servings of dairy products per day
- Foods with essential fats
- 2 liters of water (eight 8oz glasses) per day
- Prenatal vitamins

### Avoid these:

- Alcohol
- Excessive caffeine
- Raw meats and seafood
- High-mercury fish
- Uncooked processed meats
- Unpasteurized dairy
- Foods with added sugar or foods with added saturated fat

# A WOMAN'S GUIDE TO EATING FISH SAFELY

## Special Advice for Pregnant Women & Young Children

Fish are nutritious and good for you. However, you should eat less of some fish that contain chemicals that can harm your baby's growth.

### If you are:

- Pregnant
- A woman who could become pregnant
- A nursing mother
- A child under six years old

### You should:

- Continue to eat fish as part of a healthy diet while following this advice
- Eat up to 2 fish meals a week
- Select healthier fish from the market more often than others
- NOT EAT SWORDFISH, SHARK, OR TUNA SUSHI



## EATING SUPERMARKET RESTAURANT FISH SAFELY



Many fish from the supermarket or restaurant are low in contaminants. Some fish are also high in good oils called omega-3 fatty acids. This nutrient enhances brain development and helps prevent heart disease. However, some fish can contain higher levels of contaminants, such as mercury.

Here are some "healthy" tips:

- Pregnant or nursing women and younger children should eat up to 2 fish meals a week
- These meals should come from a *VARIETY OF SPECIES*, including canned tuna
- *When buying canned tuna, look for "light" tuna; it has less mercury than "white" tuna*
- *Some very good species such as wild caught salmon are healthy to eat more than twice a week*
- *Certain fish such as swordfish, shark, or tuna sushi should not be eaten*

Information adapted from [ct.gov/dph/fish](http://ct.gov/dph/fish)

# A GUIDE TO EATING FISH SAFELY

## BACKGROUND ON CONTAMINANTS

Certain locally caught and market fish contain elevated levels of Mercury or PCBs

- At high enough levels, these chemicals can cause nerve and kidney damage, poor growth, and learning problems
- If you eat too much of these fish, your unborn baby may be harmed
- It is important for pregnant women, women who could become pregnant, and nursing mothers to follow this advice

## GUIDELINES FOR EATING FISH FROM THE MARKET

Use this chart to choose safer fish to eat:

Eat 2 or More Meals a Week	
✓ Sardines & Anchovies ♥	✓ Trout ♥
✓ Salmon (wild) ♥	✓ Salmon (farm raised)
✓ Flounder & Fluke ♥	✓ Cod
✓ Atlantic Mackerel ♥	✓ Tilapia
✓ Pollock ♥	✓ Light Tuna (canned)
✓ Sole ♥	✓ Shellfish (oysters, shrimp, clams, scallops, lobster)

♥ = Species especially low in contaminants can be eaten more than twice a week

Eat 1 Meal a Week	
» Tuna Steak	» Catfish (farm-raised)
» White Tuna (canned)	» Red Snapper
» Halibut	

Eat NONE of These	
✗ Tuna Sushi	✗ Swordfish
✗ Shark	✗ King Mackerel
✗ Striped Bass	✗ Bluefish

Information adapted from [ct.gov/dph/fish](http://ct.gov/dph/fish)