
Healthy Eating During Pregnancy

During pregnancy, you need to consume enough calories, protein, fluids, vitamins and minerals to meet the needs for you and your baby. With a few adjustments, you can apply the same Healthy Eating guidelines you would use at other times of your life:

Grains:

Choose whole grains for at least half of your bread and grain products. Whole grains provide fiber, vitamins and minerals that are processed out of the refined grain products. Check the “fiber” on the Nutrition Label. Look for at least 2-3 grams of fiber in each serving. Aim for at least **28 grams of fiber** daily.

Fruits:

Choose whole fruit whenever possible. Whole fruit provides more fiber and may be more satisfying. Juice adds up quickly. A 20-ounce glass of juice (a large restaurant glass) contains at least 2-1/2 servings of fruit, but without the fiber.

Vegetables:

Choose a variety of colors. Orange or yellow vegetables are usually higher in Vitamin A, and most dark green leafy vegetables are, too. Various colored vegetables contain flavonoids and other beneficial nutrients. Eating a variety of vegetables helps you get the trace vitamins and minerals you need in small but important amounts.



Milk:

Choose the lowest-fat milk you can. Milk contains nutrients such as Vitamin D, calcium and phosphorus—all important in maintaining healthy bones. If you can't drink milk, you may be able to tolerate yogurt or cottage cheese. Lactase-treated milk is also available. Soy and almond milk may be fortified with vitamins and minerals, but are usually lower in protein.

Meats and Proteins:

You need protein to maintain your muscles and other lean tissue, but not in large amounts. 2-4 ounces of protein per meal is plenty. Aim for at least **60 grams of protein** daily (includes Milk/Dairy, and Grains/Starchy Vegetables).

Fats:

Even the “healthy” monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats contain calories—9 calories per gram. If you are trying to avoid excessive pre-natal weight gain, use fat moderately, and choose the healthier ones as much as possible.

Foods to Avoid or Limit:

During pregnancy, there are some foods and beverages that you might normally consume that you should avoid or limit:

Alcohol:

Alcohol can increase the risk of miscarriage. It can also cause low birth weight, and other issues such as learning disabilities. There is no “safe” amount of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

Caffeine:

Caffeine's effect on your baby is not clear, but it is a stimulant. Limiting your caffeine intake is safe. Caffeine is found in coffee, tea, colas, "energy drinks", and chocolate.

Mercury-containing fish and seafood:

Mercury is naturally found in almost every type of fish and shellfish. Mercury is especially harmful to your baby during pregnancy. Stick to the lower-mercury fish, and limit your intake to 12 ounces or less a week:

Low-mercury fish (12 ounces or less per week): Shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, Pollock, catfish

Moderate-mercury fish (only 6 ounces or less per week): Albacore (white) tuna

High-mercury fish – AVOID THESE: Shark, swordfish, king mackerel, tilefish

Raw or undercooked foods:

Raw and undercooked meats (and foods mixed with these meats) may contain pathogens that can make you and your baby sick. Be especially careful with **eggs, chicken, fish and shellfish**. Heat any leftovers and ready-to-eat foods (such as hot dogs, deli meats, and cold cuts) to at least 140 degrees (steaming hot is safe) before eating.

Unpasteurized foods:

Pasteurization kills bacteria that could harm you and your baby. Avoid milk, cheese and juice that hasn't been pasteurized. Unpasteurized cheeses include: **Brie, feta, Camembert, blue and Mexican**.

Challenges and Special Situations:

Pregnancy can pose some special challenges. Here are some tips to deal with them:

Morning sickness:

This is common early in pregnancy, and sometimes persists. Simple carbohydrates such as **dry toast** and **crackers** may be easier to handle, especially first thing in the morning. Smaller, more frequent meals also help. Avoid strong smells if the smell of food causes nausea—sit further from the kitchen in restaurants, and try “cold” entrees/salads. Higher fat foods may also be harder to handle. Drink liquids between meals if you get too full at meals.

Constipation:

You will need more fluid during your pregnancy. Drink at least 10 cups of non-caffeinated fluid each day. Eating enough fiber is also important. Fresh fruits, fresh vegetables (especially cooked dried beans) and whole-grains/cereals are good fiber sources. Stay as active as you can, but always let your health care provider know before starting an exercise program.

Heartburn:

Don't lie down right after you eat—take a short walk if you can instead! Keep your meals smaller and more frequent. Limit caffeine, chocolate and spicy foods. Elevate the head of your bed a few inches.

Vegetarians and Vegans:

A vegetarian or vegan diet can be very healthy, if you get enough protein, and concentrate on eating fresh fruits, fresh vegetables and whole grains. You can get your protein by eating **dried beans, nuts and soy products**. If you choose to consume dairy, **eggs and milk** are also good protein sources. Look for foods fortified with **iron** and **vitamin B-12**.

Cravings:

You may have cravings for foods such as chocolate, pickles or certain flavors of ice cream. Don't let these cravings crowd out the healthy food choices you need to nourish you and your baby. When possible, incorporate food cravings into meals and snacks that meet your needs. You might also have cravings for **non-food** items such as clay, dirt, laundry starch and chalk, or ice. This is called **pica**. If you have these cravings, alert your provider, since they might signal or lead to other health issues such as anemia.