

Healthy Eating During Pregnancy



Obstetrics & Gynaecology Department

Food Facts:

HEALTHY EATING DURING PREGNANCY

Eating well before and during pregnancy gives your baby a good start in life.

There is no need to eat for two. It is only in the last trimester you will need an extra 200 calories (that's one cup of boiled rice). But it is important to get a **BALANCED DIET**.



Try to eat regularly. Three meals per day, with a small snack in between is ideal to ensure you and your baby get all the nutrients you need.

Food to choose

Breads, cereals, potatoes, rice yam, pasta, chapatti and couscous. These foods give you energy and should make up the main part of each meal.

Fruits and vegetables. Aim to eat five or more portions a day. Fresh, frozen, canned and juiced all count towards 5 a day.

Meat, fish and alternatives provide you with iron. Include lean meat, chicken, fish eggs, nuts, peas, beans or lentils twice daily. Care needs to be taken with some of these foods. Please see later section.

Milk and dairy products are an important source of calcium. Aim to have three portions of these foods every day. One portion is equal to 200ml glass milk, 1 yoghurt, 25g cheese and 1 bowl milk pudding/custard. Low and reduced fat dairy products have a similar calcium content.

Cautions

During pregnancy, you have to take extra care with regard to some foods because of their potential risk to the unborn baby.

Salmonella

Salmonella bacteria is a common cause of food poisoning. Some eggs may be contaminated. It is best to eat eggs that are cooked until both the egg white and yolk are solid. Avoid dishes that use uncooked eggs including home made mayonnaise, mousse, souffles and egg custard. Soft whipped ice cream should also be avoided.

Listeria

Listeria bacteria can harm your unborn baby. Avoid the following:

- Soft ripened cheese including brie and camembert
- Blue veined cheese including Danish blue and blue stilton
- All unpasteurised dairy products and all pates
- Ready prepared salads including coleslaw, prewashed lettuce leaves
- Take away meals that have been re-heated inadequately

Liver

Avoid liver and liver products. This is because of their high vitamin A content, which can damage the unborn baby.

Caffeine

Too much caffeine may increase the risk of miscarriage. Caffeine containing food and drinks should be kept to a minimum. This includes coffee, cola drinks, energy drinks, and chocolate. An average daily limit would be approximately 2 cups of coffee or 3 cups of tea.

Peanuts

If you or your partner or any close family members suffer from a peanut allergy, asthma or eczema, then you should avoid peanut

Mercury

Seafood is an important part of a well-balanced diet. However, some fish contain high levels of mercury called 'methylmercury' that can harm an unborn child's developing nervous system. Long-lived larger fish that feed on other fish contain the most. - Shark, king mackerel, swordfish, tile fish. Select a variety of other kinds of fish -perhaps using an average of 12oz per week.



Should I take folic Acid?

Yes, to prevent neural tube defects you should have an additional 400 mcg before and up to the 12th week of pregnancy. The best way to ensure this is to take a folic acid supplement. You can also boost your intake by eating folic acid rich foods such as cereals, whole meal bread, bean and green vegetables. A supplement of vitamin D is also suggested to ensure you get an intake of 10mcg per day.

How can I prevent constipation?

Aim to eat whole meal breads and high fiber breakfast cereals, aim for a minimum of 5 portions of fruit and vegetables and drink at least 8 glasses of water daily.

How can I stop feeling sick?

Avoid becoming over hungry. Eat something when you get up in the morning such as dry toast or a biscuit. Cold foods are sometimes better tolerated. Avoid the smell of cooking food.

I've got heartburn

Try eating small, regular meals and snacks, and avoid large meals. Avoid fatty and highly spiced foods.

How much weight should I be gaining?

The amount of weight you are advised to gain depends on your pre-pregnancy weight:

	Before Pregnancy
Underweight	gain 12.5- 18 kg.
Normal	gain 11.5- 16 kg.
Overweight	gain 7 – 11.5 kg.
Very overweight	gain at least 7 kg.

Should I drink Alcohol?

One or two units of alcohol once a week during the later stage of pregnancy are believed to be safe.



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