

Eating for Two?

10 Tips for Your Best Nutrition

Pregnancy is a time to take the best possible care of your health. Not only are you eating for your own health; you are eating for the growth and development of your unborn baby. Even though there are two of you now, that does not mean carte blanche for eating whatever and however much you want.

It is important to carefully consider the quality of the food you eat during pregnancy. Here are our top 10 tips (5 do's and 5 don'ts) to insure you are getting quality nutrition for your good health, and the health of your unborn baby.

DO...

EAT A BALANCED DIET

This means eating a combination of proteins, carbohydrates, and fats from the five food groups:

- **Grains** – Bread, pasta, oatmeal, cereal, and tortillas are all grains.
- **Fruits** – Fruits can be fresh, canned, frozen, or dried. Choose canned fruits that are packed in water or fruit juice, and not syrup or are sweetened with artificial sweetener.
- **Vegetables** – Vegetables can be raw or cooked, frozen, canned, dried.
- **Dairy** – Milk and products made from milk, such as cheese, yogurt, and ice cream.
- **Protein foods** – Protein foods include lean meats, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, soy products, nuts and seeds, nut butters (including peanut butter) and soy products such as tempeh and tofu. Dairy products are a good source of protein also.

During pregnancy, a majority of food choices should come from nutrient-dense foods such as lean proteins, low fat dairy, fruits, vegetables, and whole grain products (this is a time for fewer sweets and treats). A balanced diet helps you to meet the increased need for certain vitamins and minerals. Prenatal vitamins help complete your pregnancy nutrition.

DO TAKE YOUR VITAMINS

Pregnancy requires a higher need for some vitamins and minerals. A balanced diet helps to meet most of these needs and prenatal vitamins are specially formulated to fill in the gaps not covered in your diet. Some important ingredients included in prenatal vitamins:

- **Calcium** – Builds strong bones and teeth, helps blood to clot normally, and nerves and heart to function properly
- **Iron** – Helps red blood cells carry oxygen through the body and to the unborn baby, helps you build resistance to stress and disease, and helps you avoid tiredness, weakness, irritability and depression.
- **Folic Acid** – Also known as folate, is a B vitamin that helps to make the extra blood your body needs during pregnancy. ACOG(American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists) and March of Dimes recommend 400 micrograms per day for pregnant women, and suggest that 70 percent of all neural tube defects (birth defects of the brain and spinal cord) can be avoided by taking folic acid.

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DO GAIN THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF WEIGHT FOR YOU

The amount of weight gain during pregnancy depends on your health and weight before you were pregnant. With normal weight before pregnancy, you should gain between 25 pounds and 35 pounds. If you were underweight before pregnancy, you should gain more and if you were overweight or obese, you should gain less weight. The amount of weight you should gain is something you and your midwife or doctor can discuss and plan together.

DO GET YOUR OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

Omega-3 fatty acids are a good type of fat that can be important in your baby's brain development, as well as your brain, blood pressure and heart health. Sources of omega-3 fatty acids include salmon, herring, sardines and fresh-water trout. According to the March of Dimes, you can eat up to 12 ounces per week of these fish. It's okay to eat these fish because they don't contain a lot of mercury, a metal that can be harmful to a baby during pregnancy.

Nuts and foods that have added DHA (Docosahexaenoic acid, a type of omega-3) also contain omega 3 fatty acids. Some brands of orange juice, milk and eggs are fortified with DHA. Read the nutrition information on the package to learn which products have added DHA.

DO HYDRATE

Aim for eight 8-ounce glasses per day (64 fluid ounces) of fluid. Water, milk, juice, tea and other drinks contain water and count toward your fluid intake. Remember though, that juice and sweetened drinks contain a lot of extra calories, so don't rely on them too much.

Don't hesitate to drink water and other fluids because you're afraid of retaining water. It is actually dehydration that contributes to swelling from fluid retention.

DON'T...

DON'T CONSUME FLAXSEED OR FLAXSEED OILS

Even though these are good sources of omega-3 fatty acids, some studies have shown they can be harmful during pregnancy. There is not enough known about the effects of flaxseed on human pregnancy, so it's best not to consume these items if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

DON'T EAT CERTAIN TYPES OF FISH

Some fish have higher levels of mercury (linked to birth defects). March of Dimes recommends avoiding shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish, and limit white (albacore) tuna to 6 ounces a week. If eating local fish, you should check local advisories. Also, avoid all raw and seared fish.

DON'T CONSUME FOODS THAT MAY CONTAIN THE BACTERIA LISTERIOSIS

Avoid unpasteurized milk, hot dogs, luncheon meats and cold cuts (unless they are heated until steaming hot just before serving), pâté, meat spread, smoked seafood, raw and undercooked seafood, raw eggs, and raw or rare meat.

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Pregnant women are 13 times more likely to get Listeriosis than the general population. Listeriosis results in flu-like symptoms such as fever, muscle aches and diarrhea, but it also may be without symptoms. Listeriosis can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth and premature delivery.

ALSO...

LIMIT EMPTY CALORIES

(This is more “okay in moderation”, not “don’t ever eat.”) Empty calories are foods with little or no nutrient value. Empty calorie foods usually contain added sugar and/or solid fats. Processed foods such as donuts, cakes, candy, soda, sports drinks, energy drinks and chips are examples of empty calories. Save these for the occasional treat and don’t let empty calories take the place of nutrient dense foods.

During pregnancy, some women have food cravings. Some do not. The occasional indulgence is okay, as long as it fits into a healthy diet and does not occur too often.

Craving non-food items such as ice, laundry detergent, dirt, clay and ashes is a condition known as pica. Eating non-food can lead to malnutrition because it takes the place of nutrient rich foods, and items such as detergent and paint chips are simply not safe.

AVOID ALCOHOL

Pregnant women should not drink alcoholic beverages such as beer, wine, liquor or mixed drinks. Even moderate drinking during pregnancy can cause behavioral or developmental problems for your baby. Heavy drinking during pregnancy can result in malformation and mental retardation.

As with everything concerning your pregnancy, it is important to bring any questions or concerns to your midwife or doctor. You and your health care provider can work together to be sure you are getting the best possible nutrition.

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