

Nutrition and Pregnancy

Good nutrition is very important. The types and amount of food you eat can affect your baby's growth and development.

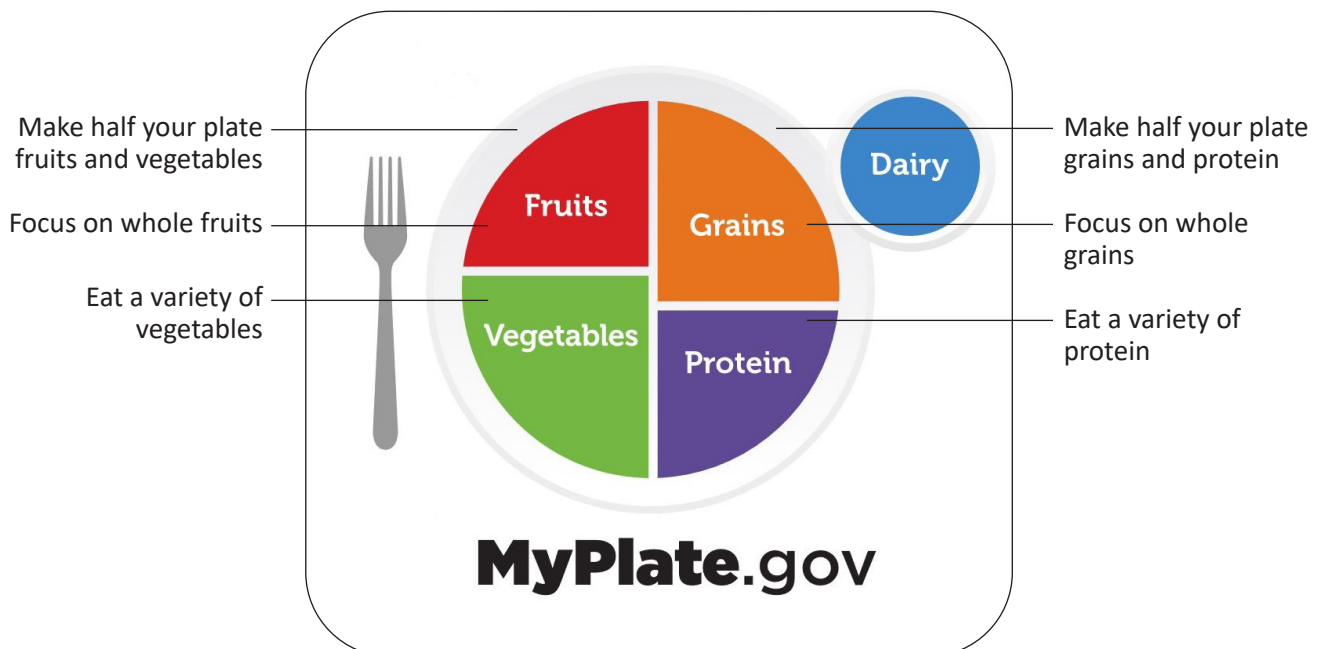
If you have any questions, ask your physician, nurse or registered dietitian.

Healthy eating during pregnancy

Following a healthy diet helps you get enough nutrients to meet the demands of pregnancy. It supports your baby's growth.

- Eat a variety of foods from all major food groups (grains, dairy, fruits, vegetables and protein).
- Aim for an average daily intake of 200 milligrams (mg) of docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), an omega-3 fatty acid, by eating 2 servings of low-mercury fish per week (see **Mercury** section below).
- Take a daily prenatal vitamin. If you do not eat seafood, ask your physician about taking a prenatal supplement that has DHA.
- Use the plate model to help plan a balanced meal (Figure 1).

Figure 1. My Plate



Weight gain

The amount of weight you gain during pregnancy is important for the health of you and your baby.

- Gaining **less** than the recommended amount of weight can mean you do not have good nutrition. Poor nutrition is linked to delivering a baby who is below the usual weight for a newborn.
- Gaining **more** than the recommended amount of weight can put you at a higher risk of problems such as preeclampsia, gestational diabetes and the amount of weight you may keep after having a baby. Gaining too much weight is linked to delivering a baby who is born heavier than the usual weight for a newborn.

You can expect to gain 1 to 4 pounds during the first few months of pregnancy even without increasing the calories you eat. Most pregnant people need about 340 more calories per day during the 2nd trimester and 450 more calories per day during the 3rd trimester to meet their weight-gain target.

You will have a greater weight gain and energy requirement if you are having 2 or more babies in a pregnancy.

The amount of weight you should gain depends on your pre-pregnancy body mass index (BMI), which is based on your height and weight. Ask your physician, nurse or registered dietitian to calculate your BMI for you.

BMI before pregnancy	Weight gain during 2nd and 3rd trimesters (pounds per week)	Total weight gain (pounds)
Less than 18.5	1.0 to 1.3	28 to 40
18.6 to 24.9	0.8 to 1.0	25 to 35
25 to 29.9	0.5 to 0.7	15 to 25
30 or higher	0.4 to 0.6	11 to 20

Gastrointestinal discomfort

Gastrointestinal (GI) discomfort is common during pregnancy. Small changes in diet and lifestyle can help you manage these common GI issues. If your problems do not get better, talk with your care team.

Morning sickness

- Eat 5 to 6 small meals per day.
- Avoid foods and smells that trigger your nausea.
- Keep snacks at your bedside to eat before getting out of bed.
- Drink fluids in between meals.
- Try bland foods such as crackers, toast, potatoes, rice, plain pasta or cereal.
- Limit high-fat, spicy, aromatic and high-fiber foods.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing.

Constipation

- Try to drink about 10 cups of water every day.
- Slowly add fiber to your diet. Fiber is found in whole grains fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, beans and legumes.
- Increase your physical activity, as you are able.
- Talk with your physician or registered dietitian about adding a fiber supplement.

Heartburn

- Eat 5 to 6 small meals each day.
- Eat slowly in a relaxed setting.
- Avoid large meals before bedtime.
- Avoid lying flat for 30 to 60 minutes after eating.
- Avoid wearing tight clothing.
- Avoid spicy, fatty or acidic foods.
- Limit carbonated beverages and caffeine.

Food safety

Pregnancy increases the risk of getting a foodborne illness. Reduce your risk by doing the following:

- Wash your hands before and after handling any food.
- Thoroughly wash fruits and vegetables before preparing to cook or eat them.
- Always separate raw meat, poultry and seafood from other foods during preparation and storage.
- After 2 hours at room temperature, throw away any foods normally kept in the refrigerator.

Foods to avoid or limit during pregnancy

Do not eat:

- Unpasteurized milk, cheese or other dairy products
- Raw or undercooked meat, poultry and fish
- Deli meat or cold cuts unless heated until steaming
- Runny/uncooked egg yolks
- Unpasteurized fruit and vegetable juices
- Moldy or expired food

Alcohol

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy has been linked to fetal alcohol syndrome. This is a permanent condition that can affect your baby's development. No amount of alcohol is considered safe during pregnancy. Do not drink alcohol.

Caffeine

Studies shows that drinking (or eating) a moderate amount of caffeine (200 mg, or 12 fluid ounces of coffee) is usually safe during pregnancy. Avoid energy drinks during pregnancy.

Artificial sweeteners

Moderate use of most artificial sweeteners is considered safe during pregnancy. Do not use saccharin (Sweet'N Low®) during pregnancy.

Herbal teas

Be cautious of unusual teas and packages without an ingredient list. Always ask your physician or registered dietitian before using herbal teas.

Mercury

Eating high amounts of mercury can be harmful to your baby. Be careful about how much fish you eat during pregnancy.

- Do not eat shark, tilefish, king mackerel or swordfish.
- Eat only up to 12 ounces per week of other cooked fish or seafood.
- Limit the amount of tuna you eat to 6 ounces per week.

If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your care team.