

## Nutrition and Pregnancy

Good nutrition is very important during your childbearing years. 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.*

### Weight gain

Healthy weight gain during pregnancy is needed to provide you and your child with good nutrition. Pregnancy should not be a time for dieting or "eating for 2." Gradual weight gain during your pregnancy is important. During the first 3 months, a weight gain of 2 to 4 pounds is enough because your unborn baby is very small. Most women do not need to add extra calories to their diet until the 4th month of 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 healthcare provider (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 deal with these common GI issues.

### Morning sickness

- Eat 5 to 6 small meals per day (one meal every 2 to 3 hours).
- Do not let yourself feel hungry.
- Cold, dry or crunchy foods may be easier to tolerate (toast, crackers or raw vegetables).
- Drink plenty of fluids between meals.
- Avoid fried, spicy or aromatic foods, or other foods that may cause discomfort.
- Keep snacks at your bedside to eat before getting out of bed.

### **Constipation**

- Drink more fluids.
- Eat whole-grain breads and cereals.
- Eat fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Try a fiber supplement (check with your physician first).
- Increase walking or other physical exercise as allowed by your physician.
- Rest and get enough sleep.
- Call your physician if constipation persists.

### **Heartburn**

- Eat 5 to 6 small meals more frequently (one meal every 2 to 3 hours).
- Eat slowly in a relaxed setting.
- Avoid large meals before bedtime.
- Avoid lying flat for 30 to 60 minutes after eating.
- Avoid tight clothing.
- Avoid spicy, fatty or acidic foods.
- Ask your physician about antacids if the problem persists.

### **Other nutrition tips to consider for a healthy pregnancy**

**Alcohol:** Avoid alcohol during pregnancy. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy has been linked to fetal alcohol syndrome. This condition causes birth defects. Instead of alcohol, try club soda, a juice spritzer, sparkling water or juice in moderation.

**Caffeine:** The effects of caffeine on your pregnancy and unborn baby are not known. If you choose to have drinks with caffeine in them, limit caffeine to 200 milligrams (mg) a day. Try coffee, tea or soda without caffeine. (See table below.)

<b>Beverage</b>	<b>Amount of caffeine (mg)</b>
6 ounces coffee (caffeine amount varies by brew)	70 to 200
6 ounces percolated coffee	110 to 160
6 ounces drip coffee	135 to 195
6 ounces instant coffee	30 to 90
6 ounces decaffeinated coffee	0 to 7
6 ounces tea, depending on brew	5 to 50
12 ounces cola	30 to 60
6 ounces hot cocoa	3 to 32
1 ounce milk chocolate	1 to 15
1 ounce dark chocolate	5 to 35
1 to 1.75 ounces espresso	30 to 50
8 ounces latte or mocha coffee	63 to 126
8 ounces energy drink	50 to 160

**Calcium:** Calcium is especially important during pregnancy so your baby develops healthy teeth, bones, heart, nerves and muscles. It is recommended that women aged 19 to 50 get 1,000 mg of calcium each day. Girls up to age 18 should get 1,300 mg each day. Most prenatal vitamin/mineral supplements have less than 300 mg of calcium. It is important to get the rest of the calcium you need from food.

Food	Amount of calcium (mg)
1/4 cup almonds	80
1 ounce cheese	100 to 200
1 cup cooked broccoli	175
1 cup milk or yogurt	300

**Artificial sweeteners:** Moderate use of aspartame (Equal®, NutraSweet®) appears to be safe for mother and baby, unless the mother has the hereditary disease phenylketonuria (PKU). Avoid products with saccharin (Sweet’N Low®). Saccharin is not recommended during pregnancy.

**Salt:** You do not need to limit your sodium intake. Use salt as you normally would unless advised otherwise by your physician.

**Herbal tea:** Limit the amount of tea you drink to 1 to 2 cups a day. Choose packaged tea from the grocery store. Avoid loose-leaf tea and use filtered tea bags instead. Avoid teas without an ingredients list on the package. Talk with your physician or registered dietitian before drinking any herbal teas.

**Mercury: Avoid eating high amounts of mercury that can be harmful to your unborn child:**

- 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.

## Food safety

Your immune system changes during pregnancy, and your unborn child’s immune system is not yet developed. So, you are at a higher risk for foodborne illness. These tips will help you reduce your risk.

### ***Food preparation and handling***

- 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.
- Follow the 2-hour rule: After 2 hours at room temperature, discard any foods normally kept in the refrigerator.

### ***Foodborne risks***

**To prevent illness from bacteria, such as listeria, which can grow at refrigerator temperatures:**

- Do not eat lunch meat or deli meat unless reheated to steaming hot.
- Do not eat pâtés or meat spreads.
- Do not drink raw (unpasteurized) milk or eat foods made from raw milk.
- Eat only pasteurized and domestic cheeses.
- Do not eat raw fish and raw meat.

**To prevent illness from parasites:**

- Cook meat thoroughly.
- Avoid raw or undercooked meat or fish, including sushi.
- Do not get a new cat while pregnant.
- Avoid contact with soiled cat litter – wear gloves if needed.
- Wear gloves when gardening or handling sand from a sandbox.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call your physician.