

Healthy Eating for Pregnancy

Congratulations - you're having a baby!

Healthy eating while you are pregnant can provide you and your baby with the building blocks needed for good health.

Note: If you are having twins or triplets, the information below on healthy eating applies to you. However, you may need slightly higher amounts of some vitamins and minerals, and more calories. You should talk with your doctor to find out the amount that is right for you.



Steps you can take

- Enjoy foods from each of the four food groups from "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide" every day. Pregnant women in their second and third trimesters need more calories and protein than they did before becoming pregnant. The amount of extra food you need is about 2 to 3 food guide servings each day. Visit www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide for more information and examples.
- Choose foods from at least 3 food groups from Canada's Food Guide at each meal and at least 2 food groups at each snack.
- Have at least 7-8 servings of vegetables and fruit each day. Variety is important. Try to include at least 1 dark green and 1 orange vegetable every day. Vegetables and fruit are high in vitamins like folic acid (see below), minerals and fibre.
- Have at least 6-7 servings of grain products each day. Choose high fibre grain products most often. Examples are whole grain breads, whole-wheat pasta, barley, brown rice, oats/oatmeal, quinoa and wild rice. Your body uses these foods for energy to help your baby grow. The fibre is helpful in preventing constipation, which is common in pregnancy.
- Have at least 2 servings of milk and alternatives each day. Choose skim, 1%, or 2% milk, calcium fortified soy beverage, low fat yogurt and reduced fat cheese. These foods are high in calcium.

Calcium helps you and your baby build strong bones and teeth. You also need vitamin D to help absorb the calcium. Vitamin D is found in milk, fortified soy beverages, fatty fish, and in some supplements. If you are not including vitamin D containing foods or supplements in your diet daily, talk with a registered dietitian.

- Have at least 2 servings of meats and alternatives daily. Choose lean meats, poultry without skin, fish, eggs, tofu, lentils, dried beans and peas, nuts and seeds. At least 2 food guide servings per week should come from fish. One serving is 75g or ½ cup. These foods provide iron that is important for you and your baby. If you are vegetarian, talk to a registered dietitian to make sure you are getting enough iron and other nutrients.

Women are more likely to develop low iron levels when they are pregnant. Most women find it hard to get enough iron from food. Take a supplement that contains 16-20 mg of iron every day. Talk to your doctor if you are worried that you are not getting enough.

- Continue to take a daily supplement that contains 0.4 mg (400 mcg) of folic acid, and that also contains vitamin B12. Do not take more than 1 mg (1000 mcg) of folic acid.

Folic acid (folate) is a vitamin needed before you become pregnant and during pregnancy, especially during the first trimester. This vitamin helps lower the risk that your baby will be born with a birth defect, called a neural tube defect. Neural tube defects affect the brain and spinal cord. Many foods contain folate, but it's hard to get enough from foods.

- Limit the amount of saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol you eat by choosing these foods less often: fried foods, pastries and other high fat baked goods, high fat cheese, butter and fatty meats like bologna and salami. Choose healthy fats (including omega-3 fats, which are necessary for the baby's brain and eye development) more often: non-hydrogenated margarine, canola oil, olive oil, avocado, tofu, fish*, and nuts and seeds.

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- * See the Additional Resources section below for information about choosing fish that is lower in mercury.
 - Enjoy regular physical activity. Check with your doctor before beginning a new exercise program.
 - If you are overweight or underweight, your nutrition needs may be different. Discuss this with your doctor who may refer you to a registered dietitian.
 - If you have nausea, vomiting, heartburn or constipation during pregnancy that is keeping you from eating, ask your family doctor or obstetrician for help.



Additional Resources

- Health Canada, The Sensible guide to a Healthy Pregnancy www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-gs/guide_e.html or 1-800-622-6232.
- Health Canada, Mercury in Fish www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/chem-chim/environ/mercur/cons-adv-etud-eng.php

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