



Healthy Eating for Pregnancy



Eating well before and during pregnancy gives your baby a good start in life. Healthy eating for pregnancy is no different from at any other time of your life. There is no need to eat for two, eating a varied diet made up from the four main food groups below is enough. Try to eat regularly - three meals per day are ideal to ensure you and your baby get all the nutrients needed.

Foods to choose

Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods including yam, chapatti - these foods give you energy and should make up the main part of each meal. Choose wholegrain options.



Fruit and vegetables - these provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. Aim to eat five or more portions per day. Fresh, frozen, tinned, dried and juiced all count.

Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein such as nuts, pulses and dhal, quorn, tofu - many of

these also provide iron. Include foods from this group twice a day. Try to eat one portion of oily fish per week.

Milk and dairy foods - these give you calcium. Aim to have 3 portions of these foods per day. One portion is provided by 180ml (1/3 pint) milk, 150g yoghurt, 25g cheese.

Choose low fat dairy products unless you are underweight. If you eat soya alternatives check they have calcium added. Other non-dairy foods containing some calcium include tahini, green leafy vegetables, broccoli, tofu, whitebait, beans, dahl, sardines, almonds, dried fruit.

Foods high in fat and/or sugar - keep foods from this food group such as cakes, biscuits, chocolate to a minimum to prevent gaining too much weight.

Common Questions

Is there financial help? Yes. If you are on certain benefits you can register for Healthy Start from 10 weeks of pregnancy. You will receive a weekly voucher to swap for milk, fruit or vegetables.

Should I take folic acid? Yes. To help prevent neural tube defects (NTD) you should take a 400mcg supplement daily before (when stopping contraception) and up to the 12th week of pregnancy, as well as eating a folate rich diet (green vegetables,

fortified bread and cereals). If you have diabetes, had a previous NTD affected pregnancy or take drugs for epilepsy, you should take a 5mg dose (only available from your GP)

Should I take other supplements? Yes. 10mcg/day of vitamin D is recommended. This is to prevent rickets in your baby. Healthy Start vitamins, free for eligible women, contain vitamin D. You may be able to buy these locally or obtain them from your GP, health visitor or midwife. If you are eating a balanced diet, as described above, you do not usually need to take any other supplements.

How much weight should I be gaining over the whole pregnancy? A good way to explain appropriate weight gain in pregnancy is the one, two, three rule. Overweight pregnant women should gain about one stone (6kg), normal weight women should gain about two stone (12kg) and underweight pregnant women should gain about three stone (19kg). You should not try to lose weight while you are pregnant, but it is also important you do not gain too much weight. If you have concerns ask to be referred to a Dietitian.

How can I prevent constipation? Eat wholemeal bread, high fibre breakfast cereal, fruit and vegetables daily. Drink plenty of water daily.



How can I stop feeling sick? Eat little and often through the day choosing mainly starchy foods such as toast, crackers. Drink fluids little and often through the day to prevent dehydration. Cold,

bland, non-greasy foods are often better tolerated. You may find ginger-rich foods or drinks, or wrist acupressure travel bands help. In most cases this should have eased by 16 - 20 weeks. More information from www.nhs.uk/Pregnancy

I've got heartburn - Try eating small regular meals and snacks and avoid large meals. Avoid fatty, fried and spicy foods. More information from www.nhs.uk/Pregnancy

Should I drink any alcohol? - It is unknown what level of alcohol is safe in pregnancy. Alcohol is best avoided throughout pregnancy, and especially if planning a pregnancy and during the first 3 months.

Are there any foods I should avoid or be careful with?

During pregnancy you have to take extra care with some foods due to their possible risk to the unborn baby. The table below lists these. More information from www.eatwell.gov.uk

If you do choose to have alcohol, limit it to one or two units once or twice a week and avoid getting drunk or binge drinking (> 5 standard drinks).

| RISK | AVOID | TAKE CARE |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Salmonella | Raw and partially cooked eggs and dishes containing these e.g. homemade mayonnaise, mousses and ice-cream. Soft whipped ice-cream from machine. Raw shellfish. Raw and undercooked meats and chicken. | Always wash hands after handling raw meats and poultry and store raw foods separately from cooked foods |
| Listeria | Soft ripened cheeses including Brie, Camembert, some goats cheeses. Blue veined cheeses e.g. Stilton, Danish Blue. All unpasteurised dairy products. All types of pate including vegetable. | Takeaway and cooked-chill ready meals - ensure heated thoroughly and piping hot. Chilled food should be stored at the correct temperature (below 5°C). Foods should not be eaten after their 'use by' date. |
| Contaminants eg mercury, dioxins | Shark, marlin, swordfish | Limit fresh tuna steaks to two/week. Limit canned tuna to 4 medium cans/week. Eat oily fish eg salmon, mackerel, sardines, no more than twice/week. |
| Vitamin A | Multivitamin supplements containing excess retinol form of vitamin A. Fish liver oils containing more than 750mg/day. Liver and liver products eg pate, faggots. | |
| Caffeine | | Have no more than 200mg caffeine daily. Take care with coffee, tea, cola, high energy drinks, chocolate. The daily limit would be two mugs of coffee or three cups of tea. |

For more information:

www.eatwell.gov.uk

www.healthystart.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk/Pregnancy

www.eatingforpregnancy.org.uk



The Pregnancy Book (Department of Health, England)

Ready Steady baby! (Scotland)

www.rcog.org.uk (Patient information 'Recreational Exercise and Pregnancy')