

Nutrition for a Healthy Pregnancy

- Healthy eating plays a very important role in a healthy pregnancy. Eating a well balanced diet gives your baby healthy nutrients to grow and develop.
- Eating foods from a variety of sources will help ensure you get all the vitamins, minerals and nutrients you and your developing baby need.
- Eating well will also help you feel better, give you more energy and help you gain a healthy amount of weight. It also helps lower your risk of having health problems such as low iron or high blood pressure.

Healthy Eating Guidelines

- Aim for three meals a day with healthy snacks in between.
- Eat a variety of healthy foods each day by following Canada's Food Guide (for more information visit www.Canada.ca/FoodGuide):

**Have plenty of
vegetables and fruits**

Eat protein foods

**Make water
your drink
of choice**



**Choose
whole grain
foods**

- Get your energy from healthy foods such as vegetables and fruit, whole grains, lower fat milk, cheese & yogurt, lean meats and legumes (beans, peas, lentils).
- Limit foods high in fat, sugar and salt like chips, salted pretzels, candy, sweetened beverages, cakes and cookies.
- Drink water regularly to satisfy your thirst.
- During your 2nd and 3rd trimesters of pregnancy, you need some additional calories each day to support the growth of your baby. Eat “twice as healthy” not “twice as much.” One extra snack is often enough. The following are examples of nutritious snacks or foods to add to a meal:
 - Have an apple and cheese or yogurt and fresh fruit or hummus with vegetable sticks as an afternoon snack
 - Have an extra slice of toast at breakfast and an extra glass of milk at supper
 - Have an extra morning snack of fruit with yogurt and an extra serving of vegetables with supper
 - Have an extra glass of milk with lunch and supper
 - Have an extra afternoon or evening snack of whole grain cereal with milk and sliced fruit or chopped nuts
 - Have an extra afternoon snack of half a sandwich or whole grain toast with nut butter and fruit
- Take a prenatal multivitamin every day. Choose a prenatal vitamin that has:
 - **0.4mg (400mcg) of folic acid.** Do not take more than 1 mg (1000mcg) per day
 - **16 to 20mg of iron**
 - **Vitamin B12**



Nutrients of Importance

Folate (Folic Acid):

- Folic acid is one of the B vitamins important for the healthy growth of your unborn baby. It is essential to the normal development of your baby's spine, brain and skull, especially during the first 4 weeks of your pregnancy.
- It can be hard to get enough folate from food alone, so you need to take a folic acid supplement at least 3 months before you get pregnant and continue throughout your pregnancy.

- Getting enough folate (folic acid) reduces the risk of a birth defect that affects the brain and spinal cord, called a neural tube defect (NTD).
- Folate rich food sources:
 - Lentils and dried beans like chickpeas, black, navy and pinto beans
 - Sunflower seeds and peanuts
 - Dark green vegetables like broccoli, edamame, asparagus, okra, spinach, Brussels sprouts, peas, collards and mustard greens
 - Some fruits like papayas, avocados and oranges
 - Enriched bread and pasta

Iron:

- Helps build new red blood cells and helps them carry oxygen.
- During pregnancy, the amount of blood you have increases to meet the needs of both you and your baby. This supplies the growing fetus and placenta, and supports normal brain development in the fetus.
- In the 3rd trimester of pregnancy, the fetus builds iron stores for the first six months of life.
- Our bodies absorb **heme iron** best, which usually comes from animal foods. Choose foods high in heme iron more often such as,
 - Beef, lamb, chicken, pork, fish and shellfish
 - Cooked mussels, clams and oysters
- **Non-heme iron** can be found in plant foods, but is not absorbed by our bodies as well as heme iron is. Plant foods that have iron include:
 - Pumpkin seeds, cashews, pine and hazel nuts, sunflower seeds
 - Peanut butter and nut butters such as almond butter
 - Dried beans, peas and lentils
 - Tofu
 - Eggs
 - Dried fruit
 - Whole grain and enriched breads and pasta, fortified breakfast cereals
 - Dark leafy greens like spinach and swiss chard
 - Eat non-heme iron foods with foods that are rich in **Vitamin C** like kiwi fruit, strawberries, citrus or tropical fruit or bell peppers to help iron absorption
- Limit organ meats that are high in Vitamin A such as liver and liver products (e.g. liverwurst spread and liver sausages) during pregnancy. If you choose to eat liver products, have no more than 75g (2 ½ oz.) per week.

Calcium:

- Helps teeth, bones, the heart, nerves and muscles develop.
- Without enough calcium from your diet, calcium is taken from your bones to help your baby develop.
- Having enough calcium throughout your pregnancy meets the needs of both you and your baby.
- Include **2 servings** of milk and alternatives every day:
 - 250ml (1 cup) of 1% or skim milk or fortified soy beverage
 - 50g of lower fat cheese (20% M.F. or less)
 - 175g (3/4 cup) of yogurt or kefir (2% M.F. or less)

Omega-3:

- Are used for your baby's brain and eye development.
- Omega-3 fats include ALA, EPA and DHA. ALA is an essential fat found in plant sources like nuts, seeds and soy. ALA is used to make EPA and DHA. EPA and DHA are found in only a few animal-based foods such as fish.
- Eat at least **2 servings** (150g) per week of fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, anchovies, sardines, herring, Arctic Char or trout. Limit the consumption of fish higher in mercury such as, albacore or white canned tuna (canned "light" tuna is ok), frozen or fresh tuna, shark, swordfish, marlin, escolar or orange roughy to no more than 150g (5 oz.) per month.
- If you do not eat fish, you can safely take fish oil supplements while you are pregnant. Do not take more than 3000mg per day.
- Choose walnuts, avocado, ground flaxseeds, chia seeds, soy products and canola oil more often.
- Some foods in the grocery store may have added omega-3 fats. Look for the words "omega-3", "ALA", "EPA", or "DHA" on the nutrition labels of foods like margarine, cow's milk, eggs, yogurt, juice, soy beverages, bread and cereal.



Healthy Weight Gain

- The total amount of weight you should gain depends on how much you weighed before you got pregnant. The following recommendations are based on your Body Mass Index (BMI) before you became pregnant. BMI is a number based on a comparison of your weight to your height (BMI=weight (kg)/height (m)²).

BMI	Recommended Weight Gain
Below 18.5	12.5 to 18kg (28 to 40 lb)
18.5 to 24.9	11.5 to 16kg (25 to 35 lb)
25.0 to 29.9	7 to 11.5kg (15 to 25 lb)
Over 30	5 to 9kg (11 to 20 lb)

- In the 1st trimester you should not gain much weight. Most women gain less than 2kg (4 ½ lbs) in the 1st trimester.
- Most weight gain happens in the 2nd and 3rd trimesters when your baby is growing and developing and your body is changing to support your baby.

Pre-Pregnancy BMI	Average weight gain in the 2nd and 3rd trimesters	
	kg/week	lb/week
Below 18.5	0.5	1.0
18.5 to 24.9	0.4	1.0
25.0 to 29.9	0.3	0.6
Above 30	0.2	0.5



Food Safety

- The hormones in pregnancy change your immune system, making it easier for you to get a foodborne illness (food poisoning).
- Due to increased risk of bacterial contamination, the following foods should be avoided during pregnancy:
 - Raw fish, such as sushi, raw oysters, clams and mussels
 - Raw or undercooked meat, poultry, seafood, eggs and hot dogs
 - Non-dried deli-meats such as bologna, roast beef, ham and turkey breast
 - Refrigerated pate, meat spreads and refrigerated smoked seafood
 - All foods made with raw or lightly cooked eggs (for example, homemade Caesar vinaigrette)
 - The following pasteurized and unpasteurized cheeses: soft cheeses such as Brie, Camembert or chevre/goat cheese, semi-soft cheeses such as Roquefort, feta or Stilton, blue-veined cheeses such as Danish blue or Gorgonzola and Hispanic-style fresh cheeses such as queso blanco, queso fresco and queso panela unless they are cooked until steaming hot (internal temperature of 74°C)
 - Raw or unpasteurized dairy products (milk, yogurt and cheese)
 - Unpasteurized juices, such as apple cider
 - Pre-packaged or prepared fruit/vegetable salads
 - Raw sprouts, such as alfalfa, clover, radish or mung bean



Other Considerations for a Healthy Pregnancy

- Avoid alcohol during pregnancy. There is no safe amount or safe time to drink alcohol during pregnancy. If you drink alcohol while you are pregnant, you may be at risk of giving birth to a baby with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).
- Avoid excessive caffeine. Limit to 300mg per day – about 500ml (2 cups) of coffee or 1000ml (4 cups) of tea per day.
- Energy drinks are not recommended during pregnancy. Not only are they high in caffeine, they also contain ingredients that may not be safe for you or your baby.
- Do not take Vitamin A supplements and/or fish liver oil supplements. Too much Vitamin A may cause birth defects, especially during the 1st trimester. Low amounts in a prenatal multivitamin are safe.
- Herbal supplements are not recommended during pregnancy. When limited to 3 cups per day, the following herbs taken as herbal tea are considered to be safe: bitter orange/orange peel, Echinacea, peppermint, red raspberry leaf, rose hip and rosemary. Ginger tablets, capsules or extracts are safe to take in doses up to 250mg 4 times a day. Larger amounts may not be safe.
- Health Canada advises that the consumption of approved sweeteners and sugar alcohols do not pose a health risk during pregnancy however, for nutritional reasons, pregnant women should not consume excessive products containing artificial sweeteners, since such foods could replace more nutritious foods.
- Enjoy regular physical activity. Add up activities like brisk walking or swimming in periods of at least 10 minutes, for a total of about 30 minutes of activity each day. Check with your doctor before increasing your activity level or starting a new exercise program.



Eating for a Healthy Pregnancy

Sample 1-Day Menu



Breakfast	1 cup ready-to-eat, fortified whole grain cereal 1 cup 1% or skim milk 1 banana 1 cup coffee/tea
Morning snack	6 whole wheat crackers 1 ½ oz. cheddar cheese
Lunch	2 slices whole wheat bread 2 ½ oz. skinless chicken breast ¼ cup lettuce 2 slices tomato 1 tsp mustard ½ cup carrot and celery sticks 1 apple
Afternoon snack	¼ cup walnuts ¾ cup yogurt
Dinner	2 ½ oz. salmon ½ cup brown rice 1 cup cooked broccoli 1 cup tossed salad 1 tbsp vinaigrette salad dressing
Evening snack	½ cup bell peppers 2 tbsp hummus

Nutrition Goals:

Sources:

- Public Health Agency of Canada: The Sensible Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy
- Dietitians of Canada, PEN resource: Healthy Eating Guidelines for Pregnancy
- ADA Manual: Pregnancy Nutrition Therapy
- Health Canada: Prenatal Nutrition, Prenatal Nutrition Guidelines for Health Professionals – Background on Canada’s Food Guide
- Unlockfood.ca: Eating Well for a Healthy Pregnancy, Keeping Your Baby Healthy During Pregnancy, Food Safety During Pregnancy, How Much Weight Should Gain During My Pregnancy?

Registered Dietitian: _____

905-378-4647 ext. _____

HOW ARE WE DOING?

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www.niagarahealth.on.ca/en/clinical-nutrition