



Eating healthy during pregnancy

A gal's gotta eat, right? Especially a pregnant gal! But just because you have a bun in the oven doesn't mean you get a license to eat whatever you want, as much as you want. So put the ice cream down, and let's talk about eating healthy during pregnancy.

Most pregnant women need only about 300 extra calories per day. The exact amount depends on your weight before pregnancy. If you're underweight before pregnancy, you may need more calories. If you're overweight before pregnancy, you may need less. Talk to [your health care provider](#) about what's right for you. Use this [sample menu](#) to plan healthy meals.

How much should you eat each day during pregnancy?

Choosing healthy foods		
How much should you eat each day when you're pregnant? The longer you're pregnant, the more food you need from certain food groups. Follow these guidelines:		
	<p>Grains Eat 6 ounces per day in the first trimester, 7 ounces in the second trimester and 8 ounces in the third trimester.</p>	<p>1 ounce of grains is equal to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 slice bread • 1 cup ready-to-eat cereal • ½ cup cooked rice, pasta or cereal • 1 small pancake (4½ inches in diameter) • 1 small tortilla (6 inches in diameter)
	<p>Vegetables Eat 2½ cups per day in the first trimester and 3 cups per day in the second and third trimester.</p>	<p>1 cup of vegetables is equal to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup raw or cooked vegetables • 1 cup vegetable juice • 2 cups raw, leafy greens • 1 medium baked potato (2½ to 3 inches in diameter)
	<p>Fruits Eat 1½ to 2 cups per day in the first trimester and 2 cups per day in the second and third trimester.</p>	<p>½ cup of fruit is equal to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ cup 100-percent fruit juice • ½ cup fresh, frozen or canned fruit • ½ a fruit (small orange, apple or banana)
	<p>Milk products Eat 3 cups per day all throughout pregnancy.</p>	<p>1 cup of milk product is equal to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup milk • 1 cup yogurt • 2 small slices of cheese or ⅓ cup shredded cheese
	<p>Proteins Eat 5 ounces per day in the first trimester, 6 ounces in the second trimester and 6½ in the third trimester.</p>	<p>1 ounce of protein is equal to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 tablespoon peanut butter • ¼ cup cooked beans • 1 ounce lean meat, poultry or fish • 1 egg • ½ ounce nuts (12 almonds, 24 pistachios)

Photographs by Eddie Berman

How can you make sure you're making healthy meal plans?

Use these tips when planning your meals:

- Eat foods from the five food groups at every meal.
- Choose whole-grain bread and pasta, low-fat or skim milk and lean meat, like chicken, fish and pork.

- Plan on eating four to six smaller meals a day instead of three bigger ones. This can help relieve [heartburn](#) and discomfort you may feel as your baby gets bigger.
- Make sure your whole meal fits on one plate. Don't make huge portions.
- Make half of your plate fruits and vegetables.
- Put as much color on your plate as you can, with all different kinds of fruits and vegetables.
- Drink at least six to eight glasses of water, juice or milk every day. And take your [prenatal vitamin](#) every day. This is a vitamin made just for pregnant women.

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See also: [Take folic acid before you're pregnant](#), [Food shopping on a budget](#), [Handling food safely](#), [Foods to avoid or limit during pregnancy](#), [Sample week menu](#)

Most common questions

How much weight should I gain during my pregnancy?

The exact amount of weight you need to gain depends on how much you weigh before pregnancy and your Body Mass Index (BMI). Below are some guidelines, but talk to your health provider about your specific pregnancy weight gain goals.

If you began pregnancy at a healthy weight, you should gain 25 to 35 pounds over the 9 months. If you gain between 1 and about 4 ½ pounds in the first trimester, you should put on about 1 pound every week in the second and third trimesters.

If you began pregnancy underweight, you should probably gain about 28 to 40 pounds. If you gain between 1 and about 4 ½ pounds in the first trimester, try to gain slightly over a pound a week in the second and third trimesters.

If you began pregnancy overweight, you should gain only 15 to 25 pounds over the 9 months. If you gain between 1 and about 4 ½ pounds in the first trimester, you should put on slightly over ½ pound every week in the second and third trimesters. While you don't want to gain too much weight, never try to lose weight during pregnancy because that could harm your baby.

If you were obese (with a BMI over 30) at the start of your pregnancy, you should gain only 11 to 20 pounds over the 9 months. If you gain between 1 and about 4 ½ pounds in the first trimester, aim for gaining slightly under ½ pound every week in the second and third trimesters.

Is it safe to eat cold cuts when I'm pregnant?

It's not safe for pregnant women to eat deli meats (such as ham, turkey, salami and bologna) or hot dogs unless the food has been thoroughly heated and is steaming hot. These foods can cause a form of food poisoning called listeriosis and is caused by bacteria. Heating deli meats until steaming hot will kill the bacteria if it's present.

Listeriosis is especially dangerous during pregnancy. Most people don't get sick when they eat food contaminated with listeria. But healthy pregnant women are more likely than other healthy adults to get listeriosis and are more likely to become dangerously ill from it.

The flu-like symptoms of listeriosis can sometimes advance to potentially life-threatening meningitis (infection of the membranes covering the brain, with symptoms such as severe headache and stiff neck) and blood infection. Contact your health care provider if you're pregnant and you develop any of these symptoms.

Is it safe to eat fish raw or seared during pregnancy?

You should avoid all raw or seared fish when you're pregnant. (Seared fish are typically not fully cooked throughout.) Raw fish, including sushi and sashimi, and undercooked finfish and shellfish (including oysters, clams, mussels and scallops) are more likely to contain parasites or bacteria than cooked fish.

Avoid swordfish, shark, king mackerel and tile fish, even when cooked. These fish have more mercury than other fish. Mercury can be transferred to your growing baby and cause serious health problems. Stay away from game fish, too, until you check its safety with your local health department. A game fish is any fish caught for sport, such as trout and bass.

The USDA recommends that pregnant women limit their fish consumption to 12 ounces of a variety of cooked fish per week.

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