

Diet Guidelines for Pregnancy

A healthy diet for pregnancy is similar to a healthy diet for everyone else. A pregnant women needs only a few hundred calories more than she did before pregnancy. A 25-35 pound weight gain is expected for women who begin the pregnancy at a normal weight.

Focus on whole grains (whole wheat, brown rice, etc.), vegetables, fruit, and protein (beans, nuts, dairy, eggs, and meat). Avoid sugar, junk food, soda, and white flour products. Take a prenatal vitamin every day. We can write you a prescription for vitamins, but an over-the-counter brand is fine as long as it contains at least 400 mcg of folic acid (folate). Consider adding an omega 3 fatty acid supplement (like DHA). Limit caffeine intake to one cup of coffee or black/green tea a day. Abstain from alcohol. The attached food pyramid may help guide your choices. Feel free to ask us for more specific dietary recommendations.

There are several food precautions to be aware of.

- **Fish:** Avoid shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish whenever possible due to risks of increased mercury exposure. High levels of mercury can harm the developing brain and nervous system of the baby. Up to 12 ounces per week of other fish can be safely consumed during pregnancy. This may include shellfish, canned fish, smaller ocean fish and farm-raised fish. The mercury content of fresh-water fish caught by family and friends is often unknown. We recommend only consuming fish purchased in stores or restaurants.
- **Cheeses:** Avoid unpasteurized dairy products during pregnancy. Soft cheeses can occasionally be contaminated with a bacteria called listeria. Active infection with listeria can cause preterm labor and fetal death.
- **Raw meat and unwashed fruits and vegetables:** These products may contain the parasite toxoplasmosis. Toxoplasmosis infection is usually asymptomatic in healthy adults but it can cross the placenta and cause mental retardation and blindness in a fetus or newborn. Many cats are also infected with this parasite. Women are encouraged to avoid cat litter boxes and gardening without gloves during pregnancy. Normal handling of healthy pet cats (petting, holding) does not place a woman at risk.

Exercise Guidelines for Pregnancy

In general, it is recommended that you avoid heavy lifting and you be able to carry on a conversation during cardiovascular exercise. Any exercise that targets the abdominal muscles should be avoided.

For women who are not accustomed to regular exercise, we encourage you to start a routine of mild cardiovascular exercise, such as walking for 30 minutes at least 3 days a week. If you'd like guidance developing an appropriate exercise program, please ask us! Prenatal yoga helps many women feel more physically comfortable during pregnancy and is appropriate for athletes as well as women who have never exercised.

For women who are already accustomed to regular exercise, we encourage you to continue your cardiovascular and strength training routine as long as it feels right to your body. Use common sense, however, and do not push yourself beyond your pre-pregnancy capability. Most women find they need to cut back on the intensity or frequency of their work-outs during pregnancy. Exercise should make you feel energized, not exhausted. Your body is already working hard to build a baby and it is normal to need more rest.