

Prenatal Education

Key Messages for Ontario



Healthy Eating and Weight Gain

Key Messages

A healthy, balanced diet will help provide the nutrients you and your baby need during the pregnancy and after the birth.

For a healthy, balanced diet and information about serving sizes, follow Canada's Food Guide. This will help you have enough energy and most of the nutrients you need. The guide recommends a daily intake of the following foods:

- ▶ Vegetables and Fruit (seven to eight servings).
- ▶ Grain Products (six to seven servings).
- ▶ Milk and Alternatives (two to four servings).
- ▶ Meat and Alternatives (two servings).

In the second and third trimesters, you will need slightly more calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals. Add an extra two or three servings per day from any food group. Here are a few examples of foods you can add to your meals and snacks:

- ▶ Hummus, whole-wheat pita and carrots, or
- ▶ A bowl of whole-grain breakfast cereal with a cup of milk and a banana, or
- ▶ A piece of cheese and a slice of whole-grain bread, or
- ▶ A mixture of nuts and dried fruit and a hard-boiled egg.

Take a multivitamin daily before and during your pregnancy.

A daily multivitamin provides important vitamins and minerals, including folic acid and iron. Some women need more folic acid or iron. It is important to take only what is recommended by your health care provider. Check the label on your multivitamin to make sure it contains what and how much your health care provider recommends. Not all prenatal vitamins and multivitamins are the same.

Folic acid helps cells develop and reduces the risk of some birth defects. Folic acid is important early in pregnancy. Folic acid is recommended for:

- ▶ All women who could get pregnant.
- ▶ All pregnant women.
- ▶ All breastfeeding women.

Pregnant women often have difficulty getting enough iron from their food. A daily multivitamin can help you get enough iron. Talk to your health care provider if you have side effects from the multivitamin.

Some foods are unsafe during pregnancy.

Some foods pose a risk during pregnancy.

Choose

- ▶ Foods such as fully-cooked meat, poultry, and fish; canned pates and meats; pasteurized milk products and hard cheese.
- ▶ Fish with lower levels of mercury (such as canned light tuna, shell fish, salmon, and trout).
- ▶ Milk, water or decaffeinated coffee and teas.

Avoid

- ▶ Foods most likely to cause listeriosis (such as raw or undercooked meat, poultry, and fish; deli meats; and raw or unpasteurized milk products, fruit juices, or cider).
- ▶ Fish containing high levels of mercury (such as fresh/frozen tuna, shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy, and escolar).
- ▶ Excess caffeine, have no more than 300 mg/day (i.e., two to three cups of coffee).
- ▶ Liver and liver products, due to their high concentrations of vitamin A.

Discuss the safety of herbal teas, artificial sweeteners, and natural health products with your health care provider.

Weight gain is normal and healthy during pregnancy. Weight gain recommendations vary depending on different factors.

It is important to gain a healthy amount of weight for you and your growing baby. This amount depends on your weight before you were pregnant and other factors (e.g. teen pregnancy, pregnant with more than one baby, etc.). The amount of weight you gain includes the weight of your baby, your uterus, the amniotic fluid, etc. A healthy diet plus physical activity during pregnancy will help you gain weight gradually.

There are risks to gaining too much or too little weight during your pregnancy. Talk to your health care provider about how much weight you should gain.

It is important to pay attention to how quickly you gain weight. Weight gain is usually slow during the first three months. Most weight gain will happen in the second and third trimesters. Gaining weight at a steady pace is a sign of a healthy pregnancy. Talk to your health care provider if you are gaining a lot more than 0.4 kg (1 pound) a week, or a lot less.

Learn more about nutrition and healthy weight gain in pregnancy.

You can find out more about nutrition and healthy weight gain in pregnancy from the following resources.

- ▶ Your local public health unit 1-866-532-3161
- ▶ Your health care provider
- ▶ Dietitians of Canada - UnlockFood.ca
- ▶ oMama - www.omama.com
- ▶ Telehealth Ontario - 1-866-797-0000; TTY: 1-866-797-0007