

Pregnancy nutrition

Proper nutrition during pregnancy is essential to support your baby’s growth and development and to help you stay your healthiest. Give your baby the best possible start in life by eating a variety of nutrient-dense foods, avoiding potentially harmful foods, and taking the necessary food safety precautions.



Following a healthy diet during pregnancy

Essential nutrients during pregnancy

Nutrient	Benefits for mom	Benefits for baby	Daily recommended amount	Food sources
Calcium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps maintain healthy bones and teeth Reduces the risk of blood clots and high blood pressure during pregnancy (preeclampsia) Promotes muscle and nerve function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps build healthy bones and teeth Promotes muscle and nerve function 	1,000 mg	Dairy products, sardines, spinach, kale, tofu
Choline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps regulate memory and mood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes brain and spinal cord development 	450 mcg	Milk, liver, eggs, peanuts, soy products
Fiber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevents constipation Promotes healthy blood sugar regulation and appropriate weight gain during pregnancy 		>28 g	Fruits, vegetables, beans, legumes, nuts, seeds, whole grains (oats, brown rice)

Essential nutrients during pregnancy (continued)

Nutrient	Benefits for mom	Benefits for baby	Daily recommended amount	Food sources
Folate (folic acid)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps support cell division and red and white blood cell production 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports the growth and development of the placenta and unborn baby Prevents birth abnormalities of the brain and spinal cord 	600 mcg	Dark leafy greens, asparagus, green peas, peanuts, beans, fortified foods (cereal, enriched bread and pasta)
Iodine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports thyroid function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes healthy brain development 	220 mcg	Iodized table salt, seaweed, dairy products, seafood, meat, eggs
Iron	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps carry oxygen to your body's cells 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps red blood cells carry oxygen to your baby 	27 mg	Red meat, poultry, fish, dried beans and peas, fortified foods (cereal, rice, pasta)
Omega-3 fatty acids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps regulate mood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes healthy eye and brain development 	200 mg docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)	Fatty fish (salmon, sardines), flaxseed, chia seeds

Protein

- Supports increasing blood supply during pregnancy
- Encourages growth and development

First trimester: 0.66 g/kg of body weight per day*

For example, a 68 kg (150 lb) person needs about 45 g of protein per day.

Second and third trimester: 0.88 g/kg of body weight per day.

For example, a person weighing 68 kg (150 lbs) needs about 60 g of protein per day.



Essential nutrients during pregnancy (continued)

Nutrient	Benefits for mom	Benefits for baby	Daily recommended amount	Food sources
Vitamin A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes healthy eyesight Supports immune health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forms skin Promotes healthy eyesight Promotes bone development 	770 mcg	Carrots, green leafy vegetables, sweet potatoes, liver
Vitamin C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes healthy gums, teeth, and bones Supports immune health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes healthy gums, teeth, and bones 	85 mg	Citrus fruit, broccoli, peppers, tomatoes, strawberries
Vitamin D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps build healthy bones and teeth Promotes healthy eyes and skin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps build healthy bones and teeth Promotes healthy eyes and skin 	600 IU	Sun exposure, fortified milk, fatty fish (salmon, sardines)
Vitamin B6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes red blood cell formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes red blood cell formation 	1.9 mg	Beef, liver, pork, whole-grain cereals, bananas
Vitamin B12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes red blood cell formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes red blood cell formation Prevents spina bifida and other spinal and central nervous system birth abnormalities 	2.6 mcg	Meat, fish, poultry, milk, nutritional yeast, fortified foods (cereals, non-dairy milk substitutes)

*It's important to remember that the amount of protein you need per day will increase as you progress through your second and third trimesters. Be sure to recalculate how much protein you need per day on a monthly basis.



Foods to avoid during pregnancy

During pregnancy, extra precautions are necessary to keep you and your baby safe. For example, mercury exposure from fish, microbial contamination from risky foods, and exposure to harmful substances like alcohol can increase the risk of birth abnormalities, pregnancy loss, stillbirth, and more. Outlined below are some common foods and beverages to avoid, and some safe alternatives.



Foods to avoid	Choose instead
Raw or undercooked fish or shellfish (sushi, raw oysters, scallops)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fish and shellfish cooked to an internal temperature of 145°F (63°C)• Sushi that only includes vegetables (avocado, cucumber, asparagus) or cooked fish and shellfish (crab, cooked prawns)
High-mercury fish (shark, swordfish, tilefish, king mackerel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low-mercury fish (salmon, sardines, anchovies, catfish)
Raw or undercooked meats, poultry, or eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meat cooked to an internal temperature of at least 145°F (63°C)• Ground meat cooked to an internal temperature of at least 160°F (71°C)• Ground poultry cooked to an internal temperature of at least 165°F (74°C)• Poultry cooked to an internal temperature of at least 165°F (74°C)
Unpasteurized juice, milk, or cheese	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pasteurized juice, milk, or cheese
Lunch or deli meats, smoked seafood, and hot dogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deli meats heated to at least 165°F
Prepared/store-bought meat or seafood salads (chicken salad, tuna salad)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Homemade meat or seafood salads
Raw sprouts (alfalfa sprouts, mung bean sprouts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fresh herbs (cilantro, parsley, basil, dill)• Leafy greens (romaine lettuce, arugula)
Alcohol (wine, beer, liquor, kombucha)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hot or iced tea• Mocktails• Pasteurized juice• Sparkling water

Caloric needs during pregnancy

Most pregnant people only require about 300 to 500 additional calories per day in their second and third trimesters—that's equivalent to one to two healthy snacks per day. If you're carrying multiples, you may need an additional 600 to 900 calories per day in your second and third trimesters.





Caloric needs during pregnancy

First trimester (0–13 weeks):
No additional calories needed
Second trimester (14–26 weeks):
Approximately 340 additional calories per day
Third trimester (27–40 weeks):
Approximately 450 additional calories per day

Pregnancy nutrition tips



Eat small, frequent meals. If you're experiencing nausea or heartburn during your pregnancy, eating smaller meals throughout the day may help ease or prevent symptoms.



Eat a variety of foods. Eating a range of foods from each food group can help ensure that you're meeting your nutritional needs. When possible, opt for minimally processed foods such as lean meat, poultry, fish, beans, legumes, nuts, seeds, fruits, vegetables, healthy fats, and whole grains



Limit triggering foods and beverages. Carbonated beverages, as well as spicy, high-fat, or acidic foods, may trigger heartburn and other digestive issues. Try to limit or avoid these items if they cause you problems.



Focus on fiber. Enjoying fiber-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, and beans each day can help relieve or prevent constipation and regulate blood sugar levels. Diets high in fiber are associated with a reduced risk of preeclampsia, a life-threatening condition characterized by high blood pressure and kidney damage.



Stay hydrated. Drinking enough water is especially important during pregnancy as water helps promote healthy digestion, forms the amniotic fluid that surrounds your baby during your pregnancy, and helps circulate nutrients throughout the body. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends that pregnant individuals drink about eight to 12 cups (64 to 96 oz) of water per day.



Watch your caffeine intake. Studies show that moderate caffeine consumption—less than 200 mg per day, or about two cups of brewed coffee—is safe during pregnancy. However, too much caffeine may put your baby at risk, so limit your consumption or opt for caffeine-free alternatives like decaffeinated coffee or herbal tea.



Keep healthy snacks within reach. Having convenient snacks readily available can keep you full between meals and help you meet your increased nutrient needs in the second and third trimesters. Trail mix, fresh fruit, cheese, peanut butter with crackers, hummus with raw vegetables, and granola bars are all great options.



Ask for help. Whether you're experiencing nausea, sensitivity to certain smells, or overwhelming fatigue that makes meal preparation difficult, asking your partner, a family member, or close friend for assistance can help ensure that you're eating consistent meals. If it's financially feasible, meal delivery services can be a convenient option as well.

Don't forget a prenatal vitamin

While a balanced diet is important, a prenatal multivitamin and fish oil can help you fill nutrient gaps in your diet during pregnancy. If you're not already taking a prenatal vitamin, speak to your obstetrician or midwife for recommendations.



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This handout was developed and medically reviewed by Fullscript's Integrative Medical Advisory team.

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