

Nutrition During Pregnancy: Care Instructions



Your Care Instructions

Healthy eating when you are pregnant is important for you and your baby. It can help you feel well and have a successful pregnancy and delivery. During pregnancy your nutrition needs increase. Even if you have excellent eating habits, your doctor may recommend a multivitamin to make sure you get enough iron and folic acid.

Many pregnant women wonder how much weight they should gain. In general, women who were at a healthy weight before they became pregnant should gain between 25 and 35 pounds. Women who were overweight before pregnancy are usually advised to gain 15 to 25 pounds. Women who were underweight before pregnancy are usually advised to gain 28 to 40 pounds. Your doctor will work with you to set a weight goal that is right for you. Gaining a healthy amount of weight helps you have a healthy baby.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. Include a variety of orange, yellow, and leafy dark-green vegetables every day.
- Choose whole-grain bread, cereal, and pasta. Good choices include whole wheat bread, whole wheat pasta, brown rice, and oatmeal.
- Get 4 or more servings of milk and milk products each day. Good choices include nonfat or low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese. If you cannot eat milk products, you can get calcium from calcium-fortified products such as orange juice, soy milk, and tofu. Other non-milk sources of calcium include leafy green vegetables, such as broccoli, kale, mustard greens, turnip greens, bok choy, and brussels sprouts.
- If you eat meat, pick lower-fat types. Good choices include lean cuts of meat and chicken or turkey without the skin.
- Do not eat shark, swordfish, king mackerel, or tilefish. They have high levels of mercury, which is dangerous to your baby. You can eat up to 12 ounces a week of fish or shellfish that have low mercury levels. Good choices include shrimp, wild salmon, pollock, and catfish. Do not eat more than 6 ounces of tuna each week.
- Heat lunch meats (such as turkey, ham, or bologna) to 165°F before you eat them. This reduces your risk of getting sick from a kind of bacteria that can be found in lunch meats.
- Do not eat unpasteurized soft cheeses, such as brie, feta, fresh mozzarella, and blue cheese. They have a bacteria that could harm your baby.
- Limit caffeine. If you drink coffee or tea, have no more than 1 cup a day. Caffeine is also found in colas.
- Do not drink any alcohol. No amount of alcohol has been found to be safe during pregnancy.
- Do not diet or try to lose weight. For example, do not follow a low-carbohydrate diet. If you are overweight at the start of your pregnancy, your doctor will work with you to manage your weight gain.
- Tell your doctor about all vitamins and supplements you take.

When should you call for help?

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if you have any problems.

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