
MUM'S GUIDE TO *nutrition*



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What you eat whilst you're pregnant and breastfeeding plays a vital role in influencing you and your baby's future health.¹

As you nurture your growing baby, your nutritional needs increase, however it can be difficult for mums and mums-to-be to get the right balance of vitamins and minerals.² Supplements can provide a convenient way of helping you get the correct balance of nutrients throughout pregnancy and whilst breastfeeding.



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WHAT CHANGES SHOULD I MAKE TO MY LIFESTYLE NOW THAT I AM PREGNANT?

Should I be eating for two?

Try to choose food and drinks which are low-fat, low-sugar and nutrient-dense throughout your pregnancy. **“Eating for two” is a common myth**, as calorie intake should only be increased in your final trimester.³ During **the final 12 weeks**, you should aim to increase your intake by **roughly 200 calories a day**, and small and healthy snacks are a good way of contributing to this extra energy requirement, whilst ensuring that you meet all the nutritional needs of your pregnancy.

Exercise

Exercise during pregnancy is important for your health and the health of your baby. In fact, some evidence shows that women who exercise regularly are less likely to experience problems during labour, and will find it easier to get back into shape after the birth.⁵ If you already have an active lifestyle, you should keep up your exercise routine for as long as you feel comfortable (but don't exhaust yourself). Walking or swimming provides an excellent way to exercise during pregnancy. **Roughly 30 minutes of regular exercise a day is recommended**,⁵ however, if you have any medical conditions you should consult your doctor first.

How much weight should I gain during pregnancy?

It may not come as a surprise that your weight will increase. Depending on your normal BMI, your expected weight gain will differ:⁴

Current weight	Normal weight gain
An underweight pregnant woman (BMI<18.5)	13 kg – 18kg
A healthy-weight pregnant woman (BMI 18.5 – 24.9)	11.5kg – 16kg
An overweight pregnant woman (25.0–29.9)	7kg – 11.5kg
An obese pregnant woman (>30.0)	5kg – 9kg

If you are overweight or obese, speak to your GP about the best way to manage any weight gain to avoid potential complications during pregnancy.

WHAT CHANGES SHOULD I MAKE TO MY DIET DURING PREGNANCY AND BREASTFEEDING?



The first 1,000 days of an infant's life, from conception until their second birthday, are key to determining their lifelong health.^{6,7} This is when environmental factors, such as nutrition, can influence the rapidly developing infant.⁸

Try to eat the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables a day as they provide a great source of fibre, vitamins and minerals. However, it is best to limit the amount of fruit juices and pre-packaged smoothies that you drink, as these can often contain high levels of sugar.⁹ Some nutrients can be difficult to get from food alone, particularly vitamin D and folic acid. Supplements can be a convenient way to meet the recommended levels throughout your pregnancy.² You may also wish to refer to the NHS Choices Eat Well guide, as this shows you how to achieve a healthy, balanced diet.¹⁰ In the third trimester you should also aim to increase calorie intake by 200 kcal.³

Breastfeeding studies show that you require an extra 330 kcal per day in the first six months of lactation if exclusively breastfeeding, and it is important that the extra energy consumed is nutrient-dense to meet the needs of both you and your developing baby.¹¹ Supplements can help you to meet these needs during breastfeeding.²



Starchy carbohydrates like pasta, rice, bread, potatoes and breakfast cereals provide fibre and are a great source of energy to help with the increased demands during pregnancy.¹² Both non-pregnant and pregnant women should aim for a third of their diet to incorporate starchy foods.¹³ They also help prevent morning sickness, as most women find them easier to digest than sweet or strong-flavoured foods which can irritate the stomach.^{14,15}

Fortified foods such as breakfast cereals, soya milk, eggs and fruit juice are an excellent source of nutrients, as they are supplemented with specific vitamins and minerals.

Proteins help form human tissue and are essential for growth and repair. During pregnancy, it is recommended that you eat around three portions of protein every day (the equivalent of about 75 grams), and from a variety of sources.¹⁶

Good sources of protein include meat, fish, dairy foods, beans, pulses or nuts. It is recommended that you aim to eat leaner meats such as chicken or turkey and no more than 70g of red and processed meat per day.¹⁷ You should try to eat two portions of fish a week, including oily fish such as salmon and mackerel.¹⁸ For vegetarians and vegans, good low fat sources of protein include beans, peas and lentils, which also count as one of your five a day.¹⁹

Why is calcium important?

Dairy products such as milk, cheese and yoghurt are great sources of calcium, which is essential for the development of your baby's bones and teeth. Low fat varieties such as skimmed or semi-skimmed milk, low-fat yoghurts and cheeses can be viable options if you have been advised to limit calorie intake by your GP,¹³ whereas full-fat products such as butter and cream should be consumed sparingly. It is recommended that two to three portions are consumed every day. A single portion can consist of one cup of milk (200 millilitres), 30 grams of cheddar cheese or one small yoghurt pot (150 grams).²⁰

Avoid unpasteurised milk, uncooked blue cheeses and soft rind cheeses (brie, camembert etc.) as these can carry high levels of listeria bacteria, which can increase the possibility of health complications in new-borns.^{21,22}

Dairy free sources of calcium include; green leafy vegetables – such as broccoli, cabbage and okra, soya beans, tofu, soya drinks with added calcium, nuts and bread.²³

Fat, sugar and salt

A diet low in fat (especially saturated fats), sugar and salt is recommended, especially during pregnancy. A higher BMI, often linked to diets high in saturated fats, can contribute to health problems such as gestational diabetes.²⁴

Healthy fats include omega-3 fatty acids found in fish, such as docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), and are essential for the development of your baby's nervous system. However, avoid taking cod liver oil tablets as these contain high levels of vitamin A, which may be harmful to your unborn baby.²⁵



How much water should I be drinking?

Aim to drink eight 150ml glasses of fluids per day when pregnant and eleven glasses when breastfeeding, to keep hydrated, although you should drink more if you are ill or exercise frequently. Try to only drink small quantities of juices and smoothies as they can be high in sugar.^{10,26}

Which vitamins are important during pregnancy?

Vitamins B, C and D support your baby's growth and development.^{9,27}

10 micrograms (μg) of vitamin D is recommended daily in order to improve growth and reduce the risk of the baby developing rickets.^{27,28}

Vitamin B12 plays a key role in your baby's development and is found in foods such as fish, fortified cereals and supplements.²⁷

Vitamin C is also important during pregnancy (sourced from citrus fruits, tomatoes, broccoli or supplements), as it helps to maintain immune function and improves the absorption of iron, especially from plant-based sources.²⁹



Folic acid supplements

400 micrograms (μg) of folic acid a day is recommended during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, to prevent birth defects known as neural tube defects, including spina bifida.²⁷ Supplements offer a simple and convenient way of ensuring folic acid requirements are met throughout pregnancy. The natural form of folic acid, known as folate, can be found in leafy green vegetables and brown rice.²⁷



Iron intake

It is recommended that your intake of iron should be around 14.8 milligrams (mg) each day.³⁰ However, this may be increased if you have been diagnosed with anaemia (insufficient iron in the blood).³¹ Whilst this recommendation does not increase during pregnancy, it is important you receive enough iron. Lean meats, green leafy vegetables such as spinach, dried fruit and nuts are all great sources of iron. Breakfast cereals fortified with iron can also be a good source.²⁷ If your body does not get enough iron then you run the risk of your baby having health complications such as poor development and low birth weight.³¹ Supplements can help you meet the recommended iron requirements during pregnancy.



Iodine intake

Iodine is important for the healthy development of your baby's brain with 200 micrograms (μg) a day recommended during pregnancy and breastfeeding.³² Seaweed and sea fish, shellfish, milk and dairy products are all good sources of iodine. However, supplements can allow you to monitor and consume the recommended amount of iodine, avoiding excess levels that could lead to complications in your thyroid gland.³³ You should talk to your doctor if you are unsure about your current iodine intake from your diet.

A varied and balanced vegetarian diet should give enough nutrients for you and your baby during pregnancy. However, it is important that your iron and vitamin B12 intakes are maintained in spite of your vegetarian diet, and supplements may help you to stay healthy.²⁷

THE ROLE OF SUPPLEMENTS DURING BREASTFEEDING AND PREGNANCY

Poor nutrition during pregnancy can affect your baby's short and long term health, reducing growth and brain development.^{8,34}

During pregnancy and breastfeeding it is recommended that you increase your intake of vitamins, iron, folic acid, calcium, iodine and omega-3;²⁷ however, this can be challenging to achieve on a daily basis. Therefore, supplements can be taken in combination with a healthy diet, in order to help you achieve the necessary daily requirements and keep baby healthy.

Supplementation can help to reduce the risk of low birthweight (LBW) infants, stillbirths and abnormal neurodevelopment,³⁵ especially supplementation of vitamin D and folic acid, which can be challenging to obtain from diet alone.

What if I'm vegetarian or vegan, how can I ensure I am receiving all the nutrients I need while I'm pregnant?

If you are vegetarian or vegan you may be at higher risk of being deficient in iron, vitamin B12 or vitamin D. Vegetarian iron sources include pulses, dark green vegetables, wholemeal bread, fortified breakfast cereals and dried fruit.³⁶ For vegetarians, milk, cheese and eggs are great sources of vitamin B12, whilst vegans can obtain vitamin B12 from fortified breakfast cereals, yeast extracts such as marmite and supplements.³⁷

What foods should I avoid while pregnant?²²

Salami and chorizo	Uncooked, cured and fermented meats carry a risk of containing toxoplasmosis-causing parasites.
Pâté	Has a risk of containing the listeria bacteria, harmful to both mum and baby
Game	Considered unsafe when pregnant, as these types of meat are often killed using lead-based bullets
Swordfish, Marlin and Shark	These fish contain high levels of mercury, which can harm the development of your baby ³⁸
Caffeine	Caffeinated drinks such as tea, coffee and cola should be kept to a limit of 200 milligrams of caffeine a day, which is the equivalent of roughly two mugs of instant coffee, one mug of filter coffee or two mugs of tea a day
Soft blue cheese and soft cheeses with rinds	Have the potential to carry harmful bacteria, such as listeria which can harm both you and your baby during pregnancy. However, thorough cooking will kill bacteria, making it safe to eat cooked soft cheeses or dishes that contain them
Raw or undercooked meats	Can potentially contain toxoplasmosis-causing parasites, which can cause severe problems to your baby during pregnancy
Unpasteurised milk	May contain harmful microbes that would usually be killed in the pasteurising process
Herbal Teas	These are recommended to be avoided during pregnancy, as little research has examined the effects of these teas and the variety of ingredients they contain
Uncooked eggs	These should be avoided as they can carry salmonella, which can cause food poisoning. Whilst this is unlikely to harm your baby during pregnancy it can make you ill, inducing vomiting and diarrhoea
Alcohol	Alcohol should be avoided completely during pregnancy as it can affect your baby's development. Heavy drinking during pregnancy has been shown to cause foetal alcohol syndrome. Children with foetal alcohol syndrome have poor growth, facial abnormalities and learning and behavioural problems ³⁹

There are myths surrounding foods which aren't supposed to be eaten during pregnancy – find out here which foods are safe to eat²²

Shellfish	However, it must be cooked properly in order to kill any harmful bacteria
Sushi	Providing it has been frozen first, as the freezing process kills any parasites that may be present
Smoked fish	Safe to eat as the risk of containing any harmful bacteria is extremely low
Peanuts	There is no scientific evidence to show that eating peanuts during pregnancy is harmful to your child
Tuna	Limit the amount of tinned tuna to no more than two tuna steaks a week (about 140g cooked or 170g raw each), or four medium-sized cans of tuna a week (about 140g when drained) to avoid too much mercury in the diet
Ice cream	Providing it is made with pasteurised milk, as this kills any harmful microbes that might be present in the milk

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We have a team of midwives, nutritionists and feeding advisors who are there for you, whenever you need them. Feel free to get in touch 0800 093 4400

For further information, please visit our website (<https://www.nutrimum.co.uk>).

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