

Nutrition Facts

Healthy Eating Before and During Pregnancy

If you are planning a pregnancy or are pregnant, your health and your baby's health will benefit from the food choices you make during this important time.

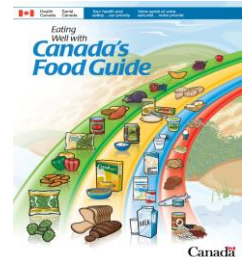
Important Nutrients

Some nutrients take on extra importance before and during pregnancy. Some nutrients are either difficult to get enough of or you need more of them during pregnancy. These nutrients are:

- **Folate or Folic Acid:** needed for proper growth of the baby and to reduce the risk of your baby developing a neural tube defect (NTD) such as spina bifida. A vitamin & mineral supplement with 0.4 mg of folic acid is recommended daily before and during pregnancy.
- **Iron:** prevents iron deficiency in women and helps to prevent early delivery of your baby and low birth weight. A supplement with 16-20 mg of iron is recommended daily during pregnancy.
- **Calcium and Vitamin D:** protects your bones and provides for the baby's bone growth and development.
- **Essential Fats (omega 3 & 6 fats):** healthy fats needed for proper development of the baby's vision and nervous system.

Canada's Food Guide can help you get the nutrients you need.

Choosing healthy foods as recommended in Canada's Food Guide will help to ensure you get these important nutrients from your diet. In addition to healthy eating, it is recommended to take a multivitamin and mineral supplement with 0.4 milligrams of folic acid. Pregnant women should ensure that their supplement also contains iron.



Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide recommends women aged 19-50 choose daily:

- **7-8 servings Vegetables and Fruit** for folate, other vitamins and fibre. Choose at least one dark green and one orange vegetable each day. Choose whole vegetables and fruit more often than juice.
- **6-7 servings Grain Products** (breads, cereals, pasta, rice) for folate and iron. Make at least half of your grain choices whole grain because they are more nutritious and provide fibre.
- **2 servings Milk and Alternatives** for calcium, vitamin D and protein. Choose lower-fat products. Have 2 cups of fluid milk or fortified soy beverage every day to meet your vitamin D needs.

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2 servings Meat and Alternatives for iron, essential fats, zinc and protein. Meat alternatives (legumes, nuts, seeds, soy products, and eggs) also provide folate, calcium and essential fats. **Fish** is a rich source of essential fats (omega 3 fat) and should be eaten twice per week. Most types of fish are safe (low in mercury) during pregnancy with a few exceptions. Limit frozen/fresh tuna, shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy and escolar to 150 grams per month. Up to 2 full cans of albacore or **white** tuna per week is safe. There is no limit on **light** tuna.

- **2-3 Tbsp. of unsaturated fat** for heart health and essential fats. This includes oil using in cooking, salad dressing, margarine and mayonnaise.

Extra Food is Needed During Pregnancy

“Eating for two”, a statement often used during pregnancy is very misleading! During your first trimester, no extra calories are needed. You need an extra 340 calories per day in the second trimester and 450 extra calories per day in the third trimester. As a general rule - eat when you are hungry and stop when you are full. Aim for the recommended number of Food Guide Servings from each food group and add 2-3 extra Food Guide Servings each day (including one extra Milk and Alternative)

Here are examples of 2-3 extra food guide servings:

- An extra slice of toast with 2 Tbsp. peanut butter and 1 cup of milk at breakfast, **or**
- Cheese 50 g (1 ½ oz), melba toast (4) and an apple as a second afternoon snack, **or**
- An extra serving of vegetables (1/2 cup) and brown rice (1/2 cup) at dinner with 3/4 cup of yogurt for dessert.

Caution Foods and Beverages

- Limit your caffeine intake to 300 mg per day or less. If you are a coffee drinker, limit yourself to two cups (500 ml) of drip brew coffee per day. Also, limit tea and cola.
- Avoid alcoholic drinks altogether. There is no safe level of alcohol intake during pregnancy.
- Avoid soft, unpasteurized cheese, such as brie, camembert and blue-veined cheeses (cream, cottage, ricotta cheese and all pasteurized cheeses are safe).
- Avoid raw or partially cooked meat, fish or poultry.
- Limit liver to 75g (2 1/2 oz.) and only eat it occasionally (about once every two weeks) due to its high vitamin A content.
- High fat, salt and/or sugar foods such as chips, pastries, candies or pop are fine in small amounts but do not eat these types of foods every day. These foods provide a lot of calories but do not provide the nutrients that you and your baby need.

Healthy Weight Gain in Pregnancy

A healthy weight gain shows that your baby is growing and developing well. If you start your pregnancy with a healthy weight, the overall recommended weight gain is 25-35 pounds (11.5-16 kg). Weight gain should be slightly greater if you were underweight before you became pregnant and slightly lower if you were overweight. If you do not gain enough weight, you have a higher chance of a premature birth or delivering a low birth weight baby (5½ pounds (2500g) or less). Low birth weight babies have a higher risk of developing health problems. Women who gain excess weight are more likely to develop gestational diabetes and to give birth to high-birth-weight infants (over 8.8 pounds or 4000g).