Health Facts for You

UWHealth

Pregnancy and Healthy Eating

Eating healthy while pregnant supports growth and development of your baby. It also ensures you have a healthy pregnancy and promotes long-term health for the both of you.

By eating a variety of healthy foods, you should be able to get all the nutrients that you need for pregnancy from food and prenatal vitamins. Below are tips to help you optimize your nutrition during pregnancy.

Weight Gain
Discuss weight gain goals with your care team. Your care team will be able to better determine your goals in your unique situation.

Pregnancy is not a time to focus on weight loss. Slow and steady weight gain is best for you and your baby.

Your calorie intake should not change in the 1st trimester. In the 2nd and 3rd trimesters, increase your calorie intake by 200-300 calories each day.

Use the chart below as a guide but your specific needs may vary.

Pre-Pregnancy Weight	Expected Weight Gain
Underweight (BMI less than 18.5):	**28-40 pounds**
Healthy weight (BMI 18.5 to 24.9)	**25 to 35 pounds**
Overweight (BMI 25 to 29.9)	**15 to 25 pounds**
Obese (BMI 30 or higher)	**11 to 20 pounds**

Healthy Eating
Your daily eating habits should include:

- Protein (egg, poultry, fish)
- Carbohydrates (fruit, veggies, whole grains)
- Healthy fats (nuts, nut butter)

Aim for 5-6 smaller meals per day or eat every 3-4 hours while awake.

Healthy Sources of Protein

- Meats:
  - Chicken
  - Turkey
  - Fish
  - Lean beef/pork
- Tofu and tempeh
- Low-fat dairy products
  - Milk
  - Cheese
  - Yogurt
  - Cottage cheese
  - Eggs
- Beans/lentils/peas
- Nuts/peanut butter

Eat about 12oz of fish (divided into 2 meals) per week. Only eat fish that is low in mercury such as shrimp, canned tuna, salmon, cod, and lake fish.

If you do not like fish, try eating walnuts, flaxseed, or wheat germ. These include sources of DHA that are key during pregnancy.

Healthy Fats

- Consume healthy fats such as:
  - Olive or canola oil
  - Fatty fish (salmon or tuna)
  - Avocado
  - Peanut butter/nuts and seeds
- Limit saturated fats such as:
  - Butter or lard
  - Full-fat dairy products
  - High fat meats like sausage or bacon
- **Avoid** trans fats, such as:
  - Packaged food items like pre-made cookies or cakes.

Healthy Carbohydrates

- Fruits and vegetables:
  - Aim for 5-9 servings per day
  - Eat a variety of colors within your fruits/vegetables
  - Choose whole fruit more often instead of juice
  - Frozen and canned are OK, just drain syrup or fluids which can contain sugar or salt
- Choose whole grains when possible:
  - Whole wheat bread
  - Whole wheat pasta
  - Oatmeal, high-fiber cereal, granola
  - Other grains like quinoa, barley, bulgur, millet, kasha, brown rice

Fluids

- Drink water to hydrate, limit soda, coffee, juices and other sweetened drinks
- Drink enough water so that you are not thirsty
- Your urine should be light in color
- Aim for half your body weight in ounces of water daily (ex. 200 pounds = 100oz water daily)

Food Safety and Preparation

Being pregnant increases your risk for illness from food due to a weakened immune system. Make sure to:

- Wash your hands before and after making food
- Cook food well
- Use caution when handling raw meat, fish, eggs, and poultry
- Wash fruits and vegetables before eating

Foods to Avoid

- Unpasteurized milk, cheese and juice
- Fish like mackerel, shark, swordfish, and tile fish due to mercury content
- Raw or undercooked fish such as sushi or ceviche
- Deli meats, unless re-heated (refrigerated hot dogs, deli and luncheon meats)
- Sprouts (bean and alfalfa) if not heated or cooked
- Foods that have been left out greater than 2 hours without proper cooling or heat

Vitamin and Minerals

Supplements can also help you get the vitamins and minerals you need. Taking a prenatal vitamin can also help you meet your nutrient needs. Take vitamins with meals.

Nausea, Vomiting, and Heartburn
Eat 6 small meals/snacks daily. **Do not** skip meals. These foods should be:

- Easy to digest
- Bland
- Cold
- Crunchy
- Dry cereal or crackers before getting out of bed in the morning
- Nutritional drinks
- Ginger

Avoid:

- High fat items
- Acidic foods
- Fizzy drinks
- Seasoned foods
- High odor foods

Do not lay down right away after eating.

Constipation

- Eat 30g fiber/day
- Take bulk forming supplements such as:
    - Metamucil® or psyllium husk
    - Citrucel®
- Make sure to stay hydrated
- Stay physically active

Exercise and Pregnancy

- Exercise helps with energy levels, weight management, and blood flow. Fitness can help reduce swelling and reduce blood glucose levels and manage gestational diabetes.
- Check with care team first to make sure you are cleared to exercise.
- Aim for 150 minutes of moderate exercise weekly (30 minutes daily).
- Do strength training and conditioning 2-3times per week such as:
    - Light dumbbells
    - Body weight resistance
    - Resistance bands
    - Increasing weight/reps as tolerated and/or approved by doctor
- Work with your registered dietitian or physical therapist.

Who to Call
If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions, please call UW Health at the phone number below. You can also visit our website at: www.uwhealth.org/nutrition.

UW Health Nutrition clinics and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) clinics can be reached at **(608) 890-5500**.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 8/2025 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced Clinical Nutrition Department. HF#8449