



# Growing a Healthy Baby



*Try to limit foods and beverages that are high in calories, fat, sugar and salt.*

## Healthy Eating

Making healthy food choices during pregnancy is an important decision, and will:

- give your baby the nutrition she needs;
  - help you have a healthy weight gain;
  - help you and your family develop healthy eating habits for life; and
  - reduce your chance of developing health problems such as high blood pressure or low iron.
- [Healthy Baby Healthy Brain](#) provides tips on eating healthy during your pregnancy.

## Tips for Eating Well During Pregnancy

- Have three balanced meals per day with nutritious snacks in between.
- Eat at home more often. It's an easy way to save money and eat better. Check out these [easy recipes](#) from EatRight Ontario to help you get started.
- Drink water regularly. You may need more water to drink in hot weather and when you are active.
- Cravings are normal but try to limit foods and beverages that are high in calories, fat, sugar, and salt, including: ice cream, cakes, cookies, french fries, fruit beverages and soft drinks. These foods lack the nutrients you and your baby need.

## Resources

[Canada's Food Guide Recommendations](#) for pregnant women age 19 to 50.

[Translated versions of Canada's Food Guide](#) are available in 10 different languages.

## Canada's Food Guide

[Canada's Food Guide](#) is a helpful resource for determining what amount and types of food make up a healthy diet. On average, you need an extra two to three Food Guide Servings each day when pregnant (e.g. one serving of yogurt and an apple).

- Choose vegetables and fruit that have bright colours. Try to eat one dark green and one orange vegetable each day. Choose vegetables and fruit more often than juice.
- Look for the words "whole grain" when buying grain products, because they have more nutrients, including fibre. Choose these most often.
- Drink at least 2 cups (500 mL) of milk or fortified soy beverage each day. Also, choose lower fat milk alternatives such as cheese with 20% milk fat (MF) or less, yogurt with 2% MF or less.
- Choose lean meats such as chicken, turkey, pork, or lean/extra lean ground beef. Meat alternatives such as lentils, chickpeas, and kidney beans are also a nutritious choice.
- Fish is safe to eat during pregnancy. Eat at least 150 g (5 oz) of cooked fish each week that are high in omega-3 fatty acids and low in mercury.



Take a prenatal vitamin with 0.4 to 1 mg of folic acid every day.

### Essential Nutrients for You and Your Baby

The following nutrients can make an important contribution to your health and the health of your growing baby.

#### Folate (Folic Acid)

Folate helps your body make healthy blood and it helps to prevent birth defects in the spine and brain, known as neural tube defects (NTDs).

##### Food sources of folate:

- beans, chickpeas and lentils
- fortified cereals, bread and enriched pasta
- salad greens – romaine lettuce, spinach
- oranges and orange juice
- berries
- peas, broccoli and Brussel sprouts

Take a prenatal vitamin with 0.4 mg and no more than 1 mg of [folic acid](#) every day as it is difficult to get enough folate from food alone. Your doctor may recommend that you take a larger amount of folic acid if you have a family history of NTDs or certain medical conditions.

#### Calcium and Vitamin D

Calcium and vitamin D work together to build healthy bones and teeth. Vitamin D is needed to absorb calcium.

##### Recommended daily amount of calcium:

- Women 19-50 years - 1000 mg
- Teens under 19 years - 1300 mg

##### Food sources of calcium:

- milk and milk alternatives (cheese, yogurt)
- fortified soy beverage
- goat's milk
- other beverages fortified with calcium (e.g., orange juice, rice or almond beverages)
- canned salmon or sardines with bones
- legumes
- some vegetables
- almonds

#### Omega Fatty Acids

Omega fats are the essential fats that are needed for your health and the development of your baby's eyes, brain and nervous system. Your body does not make enough of these fats so you must get them from your food.

##### Tips to add these fats to your meals:

- Eat salmon for lunch or dinner.
- Choose salad dressing made from oils such as canola oil.
- Use vegetable oils (e.g., canola or soy bean) in cooking and baking.
- Sprinkle nuts and seeds into your meals.
- Consider using DHA-enriched milk and eggs – they may cost more.

Before taking any DHA/EPA supplements, check with your doctor or dietitian. Be sure to purchase them from reputable stores.

### Iron

Iron creates healthy blood and carries oxygen to your body's cells for energy. During pregnancy, your body needs to make almost double the amount of blood for you, your growing baby and the placenta.

#### Low Iron (also called iron deficiency anemia):

- makes you feel tired;
- makes you more likely to catch colds and other infections; and
- can affect your baby's brain development, behaviour and general health.

Your health care provider may advise you to take an iron supplement in addition to your prenatal vitamin. Take the iron supplement with meals or a glass of 100 per cent juice (pasteurized) that is high in vitamin C. Avoid taking an iron supplement at the same time as calcium or zinc.

**Note: Women who are pregnant should limit their consumption of liver. Although liver is an excellent source of iron, it is high in vitamin A. Too much vitamin A can cause birth defects. A single Food Guide Serving (75 g cooked) exceeds the upper limit for vitamin A for women of child bearing age.**

#### There are two types of iron in food: heme and non-heme.

##### Sources of heme iron:

- red meats such as beef, pork, lamb and veal
- turkey and chicken
- fish and seafood

##### Sources of non-heme iron:

- eggs
- breakfast cereal (fortified with iron)
- breads and pasta (whole grain and enriched)
- beans, lentils, dried peas
- seeds and nuts
- dark leafy green vegetables
- dried fruit

It is easier for your body to absorb heme iron.

#### Tips to increase iron absorption:

- Pair heme iron foods with non-iron foods in a meal.
- Include vitamin C rich foods such as citrus fruits, cantaloupes, strawberries and peppers, in your meal.
- Avoid drinking coffee or tea with meals because they can lower non-heme iron absorption.



*Iron creates healthy blood and carries oxygen to your body's cells for energy.*



*300 mg of caffeine is equal to a little over two 8 oz (237 mL) cups of coffee, or six 8 oz cups of tea. Too much caffeine during pregnancy can cause low birth weight or miscarriage.*

### Food Items of Caution During Pregnancy

#### Caffeine

Women who are of childbearing age, pregnant, or breastfeeding should have no more than 300 mg of caffeine per day.

#### Sources of caffeine:

- coffee
- tea/iced tea
- chocolate
- cola
- guarana
- other soft drinks
- energy drinks
- some medications

#### Herbal Teas

Many herbal teas should be avoided during pregnancy. They may have drug-like effects and can be dangerous for you and your unborn baby. [The Public Health Agency of Canada](#) provides guidance on herbal tea use during pregnancy.

#### Artificial Sweeteners

Some artificial sweeteners should be avoided during pregnancy. Saccharin (Sweet'N Low, Hermetas) and cyclamates (Sugar Twin) are not safe if pregnant or breastfeeding. The artificial sweeteners acesulfame-potassium, aspartame (NutraSweet, Equal) or sucralose (Splenda) are safe if pregnant or breastfeeding. Foods that contain artificial sweeteners should not replace more nutritious foods and drinks.

#### Mercury

Some fish have higher levels of mercury and contaminants. Too much mercury can be harmful to your growing baby. [A Guide to Eating Fish](#) for Women Children and Families has more information about safe amounts and the types of fish to limit. The [Guide to Eating Ontario Fish](#) provides information on the safety of locally caught fish in Ontario. Choose fish that are low in mercury and a good source of omega fatty acids, such as salmon, mackerel, herring and trout.

### Foods to Avoid During Pregnancy

During pregnancy, you have a higher chance of getting foodborne illness. To keep you and your baby safe it is important to avoid foods that can increase your chance of getting sick. It is also important to [prepare food safely](#).



*During pregnancy, food safety is important because you have a higher chance of getting foodborne illness.*

#### Avoid eating:

- Raw fish and sushi made with raw fish
- Raw shell fish (oysters and clams)
- Raw sprouts, especially alfalfa sprouts
- All foods made with raw or lightly cooked eggs
- Unpasteurized milk products and foods made from them
- Soft or semi-soft cheeses like feta, brie, camembert, blue-veined cheese, even if they are pasteurized
- Unpasteurized juices, such as unpasteurized apple cider
- Undercooked meat, poultry, seafood
- Pâté, hot dogs, deli meats and smoked fish

## Healthy Lifestyle During and After Pregnancy

To help you have the healthiest pregnancy and baby possible, tell your health care provider if you have any of the following health risks.

### Excessive Stress

[Stress](#) is a part of daily life—everyone needs to find ways to manage it. New research has linked excessive or chronic stress during pregnancy to problems in fetal development, preterm birth and low birth weight.

### Smoking

When it comes to smoking, the best choice for you and your baby is to quit. To get support, help reduce your smoking, quit and stay smoke-free:

- call your family doctor
- visit [Pregnets](#)
- visit [My Quit](#)

There is no safe amount of exposure to second hand smoke.

- Second-hand smoke has been linked to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).
- Babies and children exposed to second-hand smoke have more colds, chest infections, and asthma.
- Make your home and car smoke-free.

### Alcohol

Be safe by having [an alcohol-free pregnancy](#). The safest choice during pregnancy is to [avoid alcohol altogether](#). In fact, it is best to stop drinking before you get pregnant.

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy has many risks to your baby including the risk of your baby being born too early and having [Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder](#) (FASD). FASD is the leading known cause of preventable developmental disability amongst Canadians. There is no known safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy. For more information or counseling, please dial **1-877-327-4636** to reach the Motherisk Alcohol and Substance Use Helpline or visit [motherisk.org](#).

### Substance Misuse

Stay away from street (illegal) drugs. Street drugs used during pregnancy:

- pass through the placenta and could have harmful effects on the growing baby;
- may cause brain damage in your baby;
- can cause babies to be born with an addiction;
- can cause babies to be born preterm; and
- may impact the size and emotional wellbeing of your baby. Babies exposed to street drugs during pregnancy tend to be smaller and more irritable.

### Prescription, Over-The-Counter Medications and Supplements

Talk to your doctor to discuss the risks and benefits of any medication and/or supplement you are taking during pregnancy. Consult with your health care provider before taking any over-the-counter drugs or naturopathic remedies.

For more information on the effects of medications during pregnancy, please dial **1-877-439-2744** or visit [motherisk.org](#).



You can still have fun with  
[Mocktails for Mom.](#)



*Eating well, being active and having good mental health during your pregnancy can help you gain the amount of weight that is right for you.*

### Weight Gain During Pregnancy

Gaining weight is a natural and normal part of pregnancy. Embrace it and know that you are doing your part to grow a healthy baby. It is important that you talk to your health care provider about how much weight you should gain during your pregnancy. This amount is different for every woman and will depend on your weight before you became pregnant. Eating well, being active and having good mental health during your pregnancy can help you gain the amount of weight that is right for you. This will help you grow a healthy baby, and keep you healthy too. [Health Canada's Pregnancy Weight Gain Calculator](#) can help you determine a healthy weight gain for your pregnancy.

#### Exercise safely during pregnancy

Plan some time each day to be active during pregnancy.

You can make simple changes to your daily routine or follow an exercise program:

- Take the stairs, not the elevator.
- Go for walks.
- Park your car further away from the entrance.
- Go swimming or join a yoga class.
- Follow an exercise program.

If you have any medical problems or have not been active before becoming pregnant, check with your health care provider before starting to exercise. Complete the [Physical Activity Readiness Tool](#) with your health care provider; this will help you determine a healthy level of physical activity for you and your baby during pregnancy.

#### Benefits of being active during your pregnancy

- better circulation and less swelling
- improved muscle tone
- increased endurance to help with labour and birth
- easier recovery after giving birth
- easier return to pre-pregnant weight
- improved sleep and more energy
- better digestion with less constipation
- reduced backaches and muscle/joint soreness
- fewer emotional ups and downs
- reduced risk of gestational diabetes and pregnancy-induced hypertension (high blood pressure)



*There are many benefits to being active during pregnancy. Plan some time each day for physical activity.*

#### What you need to know about being active during pregnancy

- Choose fun, not strenuous, activities. Walking and swimming are generally safe.
- Listen to your body - do what feels comfortable. If anything hurts, stop.
- Do the talk test - if you cannot carry on a conversation during exercise, you're overdoing it.
- Your balance changes as your pregnancy progresses. Avoid twisting or jarring movements and activities that put you at risk of falling.
- Avoid overheating. Drink plenty of water before, during and after exercise.
- Make sure you exercise in a well-ventilated area and wear loose-fitting, breathable clothing and proper shoes.
- After 16 weeks of pregnancy (fourth month) avoid exercises which require you to lie on your back. Instead, modify them so you can do them while sitting, standing or lying on your side.



*Stretches help your muscles relax and relieve the aches and pains of pregnancy.*

## Prenatal Exercises

### Stretches

- Exercise programs begin with stretches to help your muscles warm up.
- Stretches also help your muscles relax and relieve the aches and pains of pregnancy.

### Kegel exercises

- Strengthen muscles around the vagina and in the pelvis, called the pelvic floor muscles
- Support the uterus during pregnancy.
- Strengthening these muscles may help with bladder control and healing after the baby is born.
- Learn how to do [Kegel exercises](#).

### Pelvic exercises

- Help strengthen abdominal, back and pelvic floor muscles that surround the uterus and are stretched during pregnancy.
- These muscles help you have good posture and reduce pressure on your back

## Your Environment: Home, Work and Community

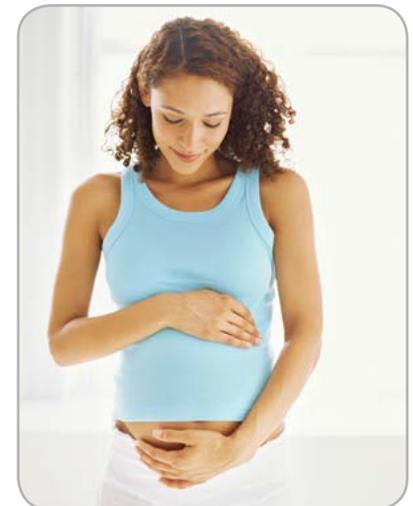
Exposure to certain substances in the environment may affect your pregnancy or the health of your baby.

### Health risks in your environment may increase the risk for:

- birth defects
- low birth weight
- prematurity
- miscarriage

### Potential environmental health risks:

- air quality
- [environmental concerns when pregnant](#)
- toxic substances (e.g. cleaners, paint, exhaust fumes, pesticides)
- X-rays
- hot tubs
- [bisphenol A \(BPA\)](#)
- [influenza \(Flu\)](#)
- [toxoplasmosis](#)
- [sun exposure](#)
- [West Nile Virus](#)



*Exposure to certain substances in the environment may affect your pregnancy or the health of your baby.*

### Warning signs! Stop exercising and seek immediate medical attention if you notice:

- Gush of water or bleeding from the vagina.
- Uterine contractions that do not go away after a couple of minutes.
- Increased back pain.
- Sudden swelling of the ankles, feet or face.
- Swollen calf with pain and/or redness.
- High pulse rate or heart pounding for a long time.
- Extreme fatigue or shortness of breath.
- Severe headaches, dizziness.
- Decreased fetal movement.

**For more information, call the Motherisk Exercise and Pregnancy Helpline at 1-866-937-7678.**

For more information, visit the [top five tips](#) for creating healthy home environments.

### Decrease the risk of infections and exposure to toxins:

- [Wash your hands](#) frequently.
- Take off your shoes when you come home. This is especially important when you have a crawling baby.
- Remove dust. Dust is a major cause of exposure to toxic substances, most of which come from consumer products. Clean with a damp cloth, vacuum or wet mop at least once a week, twice a week if you have a crawling child. [CPCHE, June 2011](#).
- Create the [healthiest home environment](#) possible for your family.



*Most women can work safely throughout their pregnancy without any harmful effects on their baby.*

### **Working during pregnancy**

Most women can [work](#) safely throughout their pregnancy without any harmful effects on their baby. However, situations in your workplace can impact your health or the health of your baby. You need to be informed about workplace conditions and make healthy decisions for you and your baby.

For more information refer to the workplace conditions and simple changes that help employees [work safely while pregnant](#).

### **Managing work and family**

Balancing work and family life is a transition for new families. Pregnancy is new territory and brings new considerations. This is a good time to re-think priorities and the pace of your lifestyle.

- Rest when you feel tired.
- Identify your sources of stress.
- Use relaxation techniques and physical activity to reduce stress.
- Schedule time to do things you enjoy.
- Ask for help when you need it.