



NUTRITION IN PREGNANCY

During pregnancy your nutrient and calorie requirements are increased. Eating a wide variety of whole foods and drinking plenty of fluids will support optimal health for you and the baby, reducing the frequency and severity of common pregnancy complaints and complications.

Don't worry about gaining too much weight – you should be eating when you are hungry and drinking when you are thirsty. Focus on eating a colorful range of foods (organic is best since it is more nutrient dense and reduces your baby's exposure to harmful pesticides) and drinking at least 8-12 cups of water or herbal tea daily (filtered water is best as it reduces exposure to potentially hazardous chemicals in our water supply). Avoid caffeinated drinks, alcohol, soda and large amounts of fruit juices. Refer to separate handout regarding potentially harmful foods to avoid during pregnancy.

Eat something every 2-3 hours. If you go longer than this without food, you may experience nausea, dizziness, lightheadedness, moodiness and fatigue – remember that your baby experiences the same symptoms of hypoglycemia when you don't eat often enough. Bring snacks and water with you to work or when you are out. Regular exercise helps to regulate your blood sugar and increases your body's absorption of the nutrients you consume. Try to eat at least 5 servings a day from each of the following groups:

PROTEIN

Fish, poultry, meat, eggs, beans, tofu, tempeh, nuts, seeds, milk, cheese, yogurt

To nourish the baby properly and reduce your risk of pre-eclampsia, try to eat around 80 gm of protein daily. If you are vegan or vegetarian, see the handout of vegetarian protein sources.

VEGETABLES

Vegetables are your best source of vitamins and minerals. Your daily intake should include an orange, red or yellow vegetable (vitamin A to promote healthy skin, eyesight and bone growth) and plenty of dark leafy greens (iron for your increased blood volume, calcium to support yours and baby's bones, and folic acid to help prevent neural tube defects for baby).

WHOLE GRAINS

These supply complex carbohydrates for energy, fiber to prevent constipation and folic acid for baby. Focus on unprocessed whole grains and whole grain products, such as sprouted whole wheat bread or brown rice pasta. Quinoa and amaranth grains are also high in protein.

DAIRY

Milk, cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese

Calcium in dairy products supports the baby's muscle and skeletal growth, as well as your bone and muscle health (reduce leg cramps and bone density loss). Dairy foods also supplement your protein intake. Organic is best, to reduce exposure to growth hormones, pesticides and antibiotics. For vegans and others who avoid or cannot tolerate dairy, concentrate on leafy greens (not too much spinach), broccoli, tahini (sesame seeds) and blackstrap molasses for calcium.

FRUITS

Fresh, organic fruits provide lots of vitamins, especially vitamin C and folic acid. If you want something sweet, have fruit instead of cookies or pastries. Focus on whole fruit instead of fruit juice – your body is better able to process fruit sugar when you eat it along with the fiber in the whole fruit.

SUPPLEMENTS

Remember that supplements are supplemental and should not be relied upon as your main source of any nutrient – the vitamins and minerals in them are not as easily absorbed as those in your food. However, if your diet is often limited in variety or quality, if you are a smoker, and if you experience times of stress (emotional and/or physical), you and the baby will benefit from supplements. Drinking 4 cups of pregnancy tea daily will supply many nourishing vitamins and minerals. In order to get the maximum benefit from prenatal vitamins, use food-based ones available at natural foods stores (the 6-a-day kind) and take them with meals. You should discuss with your midwife the need to supplement any single vitamin or mineral independently.

MEDICATIONS, DRUGS & HERBS

Many herbs, over the counter medications, and prescription and illicit drugs are contraindicated in pregnancy and they can interfere with your body's ability to use the nutrients you consume. Consult with us before taking any herbs, medications or drugs.