

Fact Sheet

Nutrition during Pregnancy

Good nutrition is important throughout all stages of life and especially during pregnancy. What you eat now will influence the health, growth and development of your new baby. A healthy diet is one way of ensuring that your baby has the best start in life. Eating for your baby and you doesn't mean eating twice as much as usual. It means eating a little more and most importantly choosing foods packed with nutrition. To give your baby the best start in life, use the guide that follows.

Key nutrients during pregnancy

To be sure of good nutrition while your baby is developing you need to eat foods rich in the key nutrients of pregnancy.

Protein

Protein is needed for growth of the baby. Foods high in protein are meats, fish, chicken, eggs, legumes and nuts.

Folic Acid

To decrease the risk of neural tube defects in the baby, pregnant women should take folate supplements. For one month before and three months after conception you need a supplement to provide 0.5mg of folate each day. Best sources of folic acid are yellow and green leafy vegetables including spinach, breakfast cereals with added folate, breads, fruit and legumes.

Iron

Iron is of key importance during pregnancy. You need more iron for blood production to carry oxygen and nutrients to your baby. Your baby also draws on your reserves, storing enough iron to last the first four to six months of life. Best foods are red meats, chicken, seafood, and to a lesser extent legumes, wholemeal bread and iron fortified breakfast cereals.

Calcium

Calcium helps build strong bones and teeth. Milk and milk products are the foods to choose as well as tinned fish with bones such as salmon.

Vitamins and Minerals

Most vitamin and mineral needs are elevated during pregnancy. There is an increased requirement for Vitamin C, B12, B group vitamins, magnesium and zinc. Be sure to include a wide variety of nutritious foods from each of the food groups to ensure adequate amounts of these nutrients.

Food Group Requirements during Pregnancy

Food Group	Requirement (Serves / day)	Serving Size
Cereals	4-6	2 slices of bread, 1 medium bread roll, 1 cup cooked pasta, rice, 1 cup breakfast cereal
Vegetables, legumes	5-6	1 cup salad vegetables, ½ cup dark leafy vegetables 1/3 cup cooked lentils, chickpeas or canned beans 1 medium potato
Fruit	4	1 piece medium sized fruit, 2 small pieces of fruit, 1 cup fruit pieces
Milk, yoghurt, cheese	2	250ml milk, 40g cheese, 200g yoghurt
Lean meat, fish, poultry, nuts & legumes	1 ½	65 -100g cooked meat / chicken, 80 - 120g fish fillet, 2 eggs, 1/3 cup nuts

Diet Suggestions for Discomforts of Pregnancy

Here are some hints and suggestions for the common discomforts of pregnancy that many expectant mothers encounter.

Morning Sickness

- Eat smaller amounts of food but more often. Instead of eating three large meals a day spread your food over six or more smaller meals.
- Stay away from strong kitchen smells. If cooking smells put you off and no one else is there to cook, head for the sandwiches and salads
- Eat something before getting out of bed, eg. dry crackers or plain sweet biscuits.
- Sip gingerale or eat foods containing ginger.
- Snack at the times you feel well.

Indigestion – heartburn

- Avoid lying down or bending over directly after meals.
- Eat small frequent meals.
- Chew food well.
- Drink fluids separately to meals.
- Don't smoke.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Avoid tight fitting clothing.

Antacids are not recommended for relief of heartburn because they contain large amounts of minerals that can inhibit iron absorption.

Constipation

- Drink at least two litres of fluid every day. Enjoy a tall glass of water 6 times a day.
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables – leaving the skin on wherever possible.
- Choose wholemeal and wholegrain breads and cereals.
- Enjoy regular exercise such as walking.
- A soluble fibre supplement may be helpful, such as Metamucil or Normafibe.

Listeria

Listeria infection during pregnancy can be very dangerous. Be sure to practice good food hygiene practices during your pregnancy and avoid foods that could contain Listeria. Please see the link below for further information.

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/foodmatters/listeria/>

Mercury

Please see the link below for information.

<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/foodmatters/mercuryinfo/ish.cfm>

If you would like professional dietary advice during your pregnancy, or if you develop gestational diabetes, please contact our nutrition department for an appointment on 3232 7686.

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Disclaimer: This information is intended as a guideline only and reflects the consensus of the authors at the time of publication. The sources used are believed to be reliable and in no way replace consultation with a Health Professional.