

The Women's Wellness Centre

An ObsgynCare facility at 204 Fulham Road

Nutrition Guidelines during pregnancy

General:

1. Have a balanced diet: To include wholegrain, vegetables, nuts, seeds, fruit, fish and lean meat.
2. Drink well: Adequate fluid intake of 2-3 litres per day. Avoid fizzy drinks, fruit juices, tea and coffee.
3. Take supplements: Ensure an adequate intake of vitamins, minerals and essential fatty acids. A pre natal multivitamin is recommended for all pregnant women.
4. Avoid sugar highs & lows: Have slow burning carbohydrate snacks.
5. Exercise: Essential for long term weight control and bodily health.
6. Plan: Think a week in advance and use the freezer to store home cooked meals.
7. Think about how much you eat: You do not need to eat for two! 200 – 300 extra calories per day on top of a healthy balanced diet in the 2nd and 3rd trimester is sufficient for your babies growth and steady weight gain.
8. Ban junk food: If you do binge then enjoy, but then get back on to a healthy diet.
9. Stop smoking: Smoking harms your baby. It can diminish baby's weight gain; have long term effects on IQ, hyperactivity, hearing, chest infections, and asthma. Avoid passive smoking/smoky environments where possible.
10. Alcohol: If you choose to drink, protect your baby by not drinking more than one to two units of alcohol once or twice a week, and don't get drunk. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) advises women who are pregnant to avoid alcohol in the first three months in particular, because of the increased risk of miscarriage.

What are you consuming?

Additives: Additives, emulsifiers, gelatines, stabilisers, food colourings and flavourings are chemically based. Many of these may have long-term effects on the health of both mother and baby,

Coffee/ Tea: It is best to reduce caffeine stimulation which can cause anxiety, palpitations, insomnia, indigestion and rise blood pressure. Tea reduces iron absorption. Try to reduce caffeine or use herbal tea as a substitute.

Caffeine: High levels of caffeine can result in babies having a low birth weight, which can increase the risk of health problems in later life. Too much can also cause miscarriage. Caffeine is naturally found in lots of foods, such as coffee, tea and chocolate, and is added to some soft drinks and energy drinks..

You don't need to cut out caffeine completely but don't have more than 200mg a day. The approximate amounts of caffeine found in food and drinks are:

- one mug of instant coffee: 100mg
- one mug of filter coffee: 140mg
- one mug of tea: 75mg
- one can of cola: 40mg
- one can of energy drink: 80mg
- one 50g bar of plain (dark) chocolate: around 50mg
- one 50g bar of milk chocolate: around 25mg

So if you have, for example, one bar of chocolate and one mug of filter coffee, you have reached almost 200mg of caffeine. Don't worry if you occasionally have more than this amount. The risks are quite small. To cut down on caffeine, try decaffeinated tea and coffee, fruit juice or mineral water instead of regular tea, coffee, cola and energy drinks

Fruit: Fruit juices are high in sugar. Two or three pieces of fruit are sufficient. (Apples and pears have less sugar than soft fruits. Dried fruit contain more sugar)

Wheat: Bread is a good source of carbohydrates, provided it is wholemeal. Try to eat wholemeal instead of white paste.

Dairy products: Dairy foods such as milk, cheese, fromage frais and yoghurt are important because they contain calcium and other nutrients that your baby needs. Choose low-fat varieties wherever possible. For example, semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, low-fat yoghurt and half-fat hard cheese. Aim for two to three portions a day. There are some cheeses to avoid. Yoghurt is the easiest dairy product to digest.

Cheese to avoid: Don't eat mould-ripened soft cheese, such as brie, camembert and chevre (a type of goat's cheese) and others with a similar rind. You should also avoid soft blue-veined cheeses such as Danish blue or gorgonzola. These are made with mould and they can contain listeria, a type of bacteria that can harm your unborn baby. Although infection with listeria (listeriosis) is rare, it is important to take special precautions in pregnancy because even a mild form of the illness in a pregnant woman can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth or severe illness in a newborn baby.

You can eat hard cheeses such as cheddar, parmesan and stilton, even if they're made with unpasteurised milk. Hard cheeses don't contain as much water as soft cheeses so bacteria are less likely to grow in them. Many other types of cheese are ok to eat, but make sure they're made from pasteurised milk. This includes cottage cheese, mozzarella, feta, cream cheese, paneer, ricotta, halloumi, goats' cheese and processed cheeses such as cheese spreads

Nuts/ Seeds: These are excellent sources of essential fatty acids, protein, calcium and slow burning carbohydrates. If you would like to eat peanuts or food containing peanuts (such as peanut butter) during pregnancy, you can choose to do so as part of a healthy balanced diet, unless you are allergic to them or your health professional advises you not to.

You may have heard that some women have, in the past, chosen not to eat peanuts when they were pregnant. This is because the government previously advised women that they may wish to avoid eating peanuts if there was a history of allergy (such as asthma, eczema, hay fever, food allergy or other types of allergy) in their child's immediate family.

This advice has now been changed because the latest research has shown that there is no clear evidence to say if eating or not eating peanuts during pregnancy affects the chances of your baby developing a peanut allergy.

Salt: Avoid salty foods (e.g. crisps), use a minimum in cooking and don't add salt to your meal.

Spices: Spicy food may cause heartburn or indigestion, but is otherwise harmless.

Sugar: Fast burning sugars (simple carbohydrates) such as fruit drinks, sweets, chocolate etc, cause peaks in of high and low energy.

Vegetables: Vegetables are a good source of iron, folic acid and vitamins.

Proteins: Are essential to your diet, they consist of amino acids and are used as building blocks for every cell. Meat, fish, eggs, vegetables, cereals and grains contain protein.

Carbohydrates: Slow burning (complex carbohydrates) such as oats, whole-wheat, brown rice provide energy for a longer period.

Fats: Essential fatty acids are crucial for normal and healthy physiology. Avoid saturated fats where possible (butter, lard etc).

Raw or partially cooked eggs: Make sure that eggs are thoroughly cooked until the whites and yolks are solid. This prevents the risk of salmonella food poisoning. Avoid foods that contain raw and undercooked eggs, such as homemade mayonnaise. If you wish to have dishes that contain raw or partially cooked eggs you should consider using pasteurised liquid egg.

Meat/ Fish: Meat and fish are both great sources of nutrition. Cook all meat and poultry thoroughly so that there's no trace of pink or blood. Take particular care with poultry, pork, sausages and minced meat, including burgers. It is fine to eat whole cuts of beef and lamb such as steaks, cutlets and joints (but not rolled joints) rare, as long as the outside has been properly cooked

Cold meats and smoked salmon: Some countries advise pregnant women not to eat cold meats or smoked fish because of the risk of listeria. In the UK, we don't advise women to avoid these products because the risk is low. The risk of listeria is much higher with cheeses such as camembert, brie or chevre (a type of goat's cheese) and others with a similar rind, or pâté, which you shouldn't eat during pregnancy. However, if you are concerned, you might also choose to avoid cold meats and smoked fish while you are pregnant

Fish to limit:

Don't eat shark, marlin and swordfish, and limit the amount of tuna you eat to:

- no more than two tuna steaks a week (about 140g cooked or 170g raw each), or
- four medium-sized cans of tuna a week (about 140g when drained)

These types of fish contain high levels of mercury that can damage your baby's developing nervous system. Don't eat more than two portions of oily fish a week. Oily fish includes fresh tuna (but not canned tuna), salmon, mackerel, sardines and trout

You should also avoid eating raw shellfish. This will reduce your chances of getting food poisoning, which can be particularly unpleasant when you're pregnant.

Sushi: Its fine to eat sushi and other dishes made with raw fish when you're pregnant as long as the fish used to make it has been frozen first. This is because occasionally fish contains small parasitic worms that could make you ill. Freezing kills the worms and makes raw fish safe to eat. Sushi sold in shops or restaurants, whether it's ready-made or made in the shop, should be fine to eat. This is because the raw fish the shop uses to make sushi must have been frozen at minus 20C for at least 24 hours.

If you make your own sushi at home, freeze the fish for at least 24 hours before using it.

Some raw fish used to make sushi, such as smoked salmon, doesn't need to be frozen before it's used. This is because smoking kills any worms in the fish.

Liver products: Don't eat liver or liver products such as liver pâté or liver sausage, as they may contain a lot of vitamin A. Too much vitamin A can harm your baby.

Pâté: Avoid all types of pâté, including vegetable pâtés, as they can contain listeria.

Supplements containing vitamin A: Don't take high-dose multivitamin supplements, fish liver oil supplements or any supplements containing vitamin A.

Folic acid:

All women who could get pregnant are advised to take a 400 microgram folic acid tablet every day, though some women with conditions including diabetes and epilepsy need a higher 5mg dose, which can be prescribed by your GP. You need the extra folic acid until the 12th week of pregnancy. This can help prevent birth defects, which are known as neural tube defects, such as spina bifida. You also get folic acid from green, leafy vegetables, but don't overcook them as this destroys the vitamin. Some breakfast cereals, breads and margarines have had folic acid added to them, so look at the label.