



Healthy Families Homebirth

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Nutrition Importance During Pregnancy

"Growing a baby is a big job that requires you to have good materials, enough to meet your needs and your baby's"

~Aviva Jill Romm

A healthy pregnancy, postpartum, and family starts with putting the best foods into your body. Making the commitment to eat good quality food ensures that your baby will be getting the best possible start to life. A healthy pregnancy diet can help prevent common pregnancy issues, such as persistent constipation, headaches, leg cramps, and exhaustion, as well as more complicated problems, like high blood pressure, toxemia, and preeclampsia. During pregnancy is not the time to start or continue a weight loss plan. If you have had issues surrounding your weight in the past, please talk to your health care provider and/or a professional counselor about it. When you are eating healthy foods, the weight you gain during pregnancy is for a positive reason. Listed below are some key food groups to eat from, common foods to avoid or eat in moderation, and key points about different diets.

Pregnancy Highlights

1st Trimester

- Morning sickness, or as it should be renamed- any time of the day sickness, is the most common complaint reported at the beginning of pregnancy.
- Eating small protein-packed snacks throughout the day AND night can help combat this pesky problem. Keep some almonds or other nuts by your bed just in case you wake up at night.
- You may also want to consider adding lemon to your drinks or smell one before you eat; it's been found to help mask the overwhelming amounts of smells in a meal.
- Staying hydrated is important. Drink small amounts of clear liquid, like water, with an optional squeeze of lemon- all day long, instead of trying to drink a big glass of water in a sitting.
- Take your B's. B-vitamin complex is especially important during this stage in fetal development. If your prenatal or B-complex vitamin makes you feel queasy, try taking it with a spoonful of peanut butter in the morning. A bit of food can help the body digest a vitamin more effectively than by itself. If still no luck, then try it with a meal or switch the supplement. Food based supplements are often gentler on the stomach; Mega Foods, Vitamin Code, and New Chapter are some examples. Whole grain foods, green vegetables, and fortified cereals are all high in B-vitamins.

2nd Trimester

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- This is generally the time of pregnancy that you will feel your best! This is the time to get your diet and exercise in order.
- Work up to adding 300-500 additional nutritious calories into your diet.
- Start, restart, or get more involved in a moderate exercise routine. Remember the more you exercise the more calories you need.
- Check into your lifestyle habits. Hopefully smoking and drinking alcohol have been off your radar since that pregnancy test showed up positive, but now is the time to look at where you can improve other things in your life, like stress. Perhaps a daily rest, meditation, or nap is in order. Maybe carving out special child and mommy time is needed. Even more importantly, creating a special time of the week for you and your partner can and should be established during this time.

3rd Trimester

- You've made it to the final stretch. Now your baby is gaining weight and building muscle and bone mass and your body is stocking up for the calorie burning exercise of breastfeeding.
- Keep up the exercise. Try to get a walk daily, swimming and prenatal yoga weekly. Be creative- dancing while cooking dinner counts as exercise for the day!
- Eating smaller, frequent meals may be all you can tolerate now. Your digestive organs are competing for space with your expanding uterus. Perhaps the only digestive organ not competing for space is your mouth- so make the most of it and chew thoroughly.
*Make those smaller meals count with Super Foods (see list below).

Remember that a baby born at this time would need to eat every 2-3 hours. That is how often you should be feeding yourself too!

Keeping it Simple-

- Include a protein, fresh or cooked vegetable, a whole grain, and fresh fruit at every meal.
- Eat a wide variety of foods
- Drink your way through the day- keep a water bottle near-by and refill it often
- Eat breakfast and don't skip meals.
- Keep sweets and processed foods at a moderate amount.

The Pregnancy Food Groups:

Protein- About 80-100 grams of protein per day is recommended. The additional protein helps with blood volume expansion, fetal growth and development, uterine muscle growth, and lowers the risk of toxemia. The key is increasing both protein and calories. If protein is burned for energy, then less amino acids will be available to your developing baby.

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Carbohydrates- Carbohydrates are the main source that your body uses to burn energy. If you aren't including plenty of whole grain carbs into your diet, your body may burn protein and fats for energy instead. This will leave fewer reserves for your developing baby and could create ketones in your urine- which is one sign of gestational diabetes. Be sure to get your carbs from whole grain sources. Avoid refined white flours and foods.

Fruits and vegetables- Not only are fruits and vegetables a source for liquids, they are packed full of vitamins, minerals, and fiber. The more colorful a fruit or vegetable is, the more nutritious it is. Fresh fruits and vegetables are preferred, with locally grown and/or organically grown being the highest quality. Next nutritious are frozen fruits and vegetables. Generally fruits and vegetables are frozen at the time of harvest and that will help maintain the nutrients in the food. Lastly, canned or packaged fruits and vegetables should be considered. These should only be eaten as your vegetable or fruit serving, as a last resort. Generally canning involves a lot of sugar or salt, and cooking it at very high temperatures destroys nutrients.

Fats- Yes, you do need to eat fats! Good fats- I'll get to this in a moment- surround the nerves and are the main component in the brain. Fat on your body can store hormones, provides temperature regulation, and protects your organs. Of course, there is a good balance of fat that should be maintained on the body, but pregnancy isn't the right time to be overly concerned about it. What you should be concerned about are the types of fats you are eating. Bad fats, such as trans-fats, which should be avoided altogether, and saturated fats, which should be limited, can cause an increase in cholesterol and cardiovascular issues. Good fats, like Omega-3, Omega-6, and Omega-9, can be enjoyed daily. See below for great sources of good fats.

Fluids- Increased blood supply, amniotic fluid, and extra tissue support all rely on additional fluids. The USDA recommends about 12 cups or 3 liters of fluid a day for pregnant women. About 20% of that fluid is likely to come from the foods you eat, while the other 80% should come from clean water (mostly), juices, and decaffeinated teas. Healthy kidneys can filter out excessive amounts of water, but be aware that drinking more than 24 oz of fluid an hour can disturb the blood's electrolyte balance.

Salt and other minerals

- *Iron-* Iron deficiency anemia increases the risk of a low-birth weight or premature infant. Traveling to higher altitudes will increase your body's need for this mineral. Even if you eat red meat, it may be important to supplement some. Blood tests that are done throughout your prenatal care will determine if any additional actions should be taken.
- *Calcium-* Calcium is especially important in the third trimester and during breastfeeding when your baby is building bones. The RDA for pregnant and breastfeeding women is

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1,200 to 1,500 milligrams of calcium a day. Plus, calcium lowers your risk of high blood pressure.

- *Iodine*- Iodine is only needed in small amounts in our diet, but I include it here because many of us do not get this mineral at all! Iodine is the key player in creating Thyroid hormone- T3 and T4 (T3 has 3 molecules of iodine, while T4 has 4 molecules). During pregnancy your Thyroid gland is working hard to meet the demands of a growing baby. Be sure to include iodine sources into your daily or weekly meals. (See below for sources)

B-vitamin supplements- Are not a food group, but worth mentioning. Even though many foods have B-vitamins, I believe that all adults should take an extra supplement. B-vitamins are a water soluble nutrient. This means that the body generally doesn't store or hold onto B-vitamins very well. Also, several studies have shown that women generally lack enough B- vitamins pre-pregnancy. B-vitamins work as a family in the body and they compete for absorption. If you take only one B-vitamin, you could become deficient in another. B-vitamins help your body use energy better, which means it may help with that pregnancy brain you just discovered you have!

Food Group Sources:

Protein ideas: Choose lean cuts of meat and leave the skin and fat off; Milk and milk products; Eggs; Soy products; Quinoa; TVP-textured vegetable protein; Legumes- beans, peanuts, whole grains- brown rice, oatmeal, whole wheat flour, millet, buckwheat; nuts- cashews, almonds, sesame seeds.

Carbohydrate ideas: Go for whole grain varieties whenever possible- pasta, bread, bagels, tortilla, Corn bread, dinner roll or biscuit; starchy vegetables and fruit also provide carbs- corn, lima beans, beets, potato, figs, papaya, banana, pineapple, squash.

Adding more fruits and vegetables: I love making a smoothie with berries, coconut milk, and blackstrap molasses in the morning. It's a nutrient rich breakfast! Melons; Tomatoes and tomato products; Berries; Citrus fruits; Broccoli; various greens- the darker the better. A great source when shopping for produce is to ask the people working in the department how they would cook or eat a certain fruit or vegetable. Bring home something new each grocery trip and eat it that night.

Good fats: Omega 3 and 6 are good fats that we have to get from our diet. Our body doesn't make them. Omega 9 is a fat that our body can make at will. Omega 9 is the most abundant

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fatty acid in nature and not in short supply in our diets. The best place to eat your Omega 9 fats are from olive oil because of other nutrients in the oil. The next easiest fat to consume is Omega 6. This fat is found in soy oil, sunflower seeds and oil, flax seeds, hemp seeds and powder, pumpkin seeds, peanuts, almonds, and many other seeds, nuts, and oils. As you can see, it is likely you are already consuming plenty of Omega 6 fatty acids. Omega-6's partner is Omega-3. Our diets should have a 2:1 ratio of Omega-6 to Omega-3. So where are natural sources of Omega-3? Flax seeds and oil; hemp seeds, oil and powder; chia seeds; soybeans and tofu; and fatty fish- salmon, sardines, halibut, snapper, and scallops.

Iron sources: Dried fruits- apricots, raisins, figs, prunes, and cherries; dark leafy green vegetables- kale, swiss chard, collards; blackstrap molasses, sea vegetables, dried beans, legumes, whole grains, eggs, lean red meat, and eggs. Floradix iron supplement has been shown to raise serum iron levels quickly if needed.

Alternative ways to get more calcium: Almond milk, leafy green vegetables, sea vegetables, salmon, and blackstrap molasses

Iodine- Sea vegetables are the most abundant source- Kelp flakes can be added to almost anything without changing the flavor too much. Iodized salt is another way to make sure this mineral is in your diet.

"Super Foods"

I consider the following foods super foods because they pack lots of nutrients in a little package. If you want help finding them or tips on using them, let me know. The web has recipes that are easy.

Quinoa- A complete protein this little seed cooks like rice, yet has so much to offer. One cup= 15% of daily iron; 30% magnesium; 28% phosphorus; 19% Folic acid; 58% Manganese; plus it's high in fiber!

Kale- You won't believe your eyes with 1 cup of raw kale providing 206% of your daily Vitamin A; 134% Vitamin C; 684% Vitamin K; plus Omega-3 and 6 this leafy green will be your new best friend.

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Blackstrap molasses- This thick syrup can be used to provide the key flavoring in baked beans or ginger bread. With 12% daily value of calcium, 14% copper, 13% iron, 18% manganese; and several B-vitamins, you'll be finding new ways to add it to your menu.

Almonds- This handy on-the-go snack is a great way to fill up when you're out or in bed. For 1 cup of roasted almonds you'll get 108% DV of magnesium, 46% Calcium; 32% iron; 73% phosphorus; 31% potassium; Omega-6, plus 33 grams of protein!

Flax seed powder and oil- High in Omega-3 and 6 you can't pass on the flax. The ground seeds can be added to oatmeal, muffins, salads, or yogurt to give it a boost. The oil can be used as salad dressing or anywhere oil could be used. Don't cook with the oil though. It'll destroy the valuable Omegas. Flax is also high in folic acid and B6.

Hemp- Hemp is one of the best kept secrets. It is high in fiber, Omega 3 and 6, and is a green food. Hemp seeds also contain 48% DV of Magnesium, 16% Iron, and 23% Zinc. Mostly available in protein powders it is a great way to start the day or boost your afternoon.

Foods to Avoid!

- ❖ Overall, it is best not to waste your money, time, or digestion eating these types of foods.

Trans-fats- This is a manufactured fat that the food industry created to keep pastries and bread on the shelf longer. Unfortunately, our bodies don't process trans-fats the way that regular fats get processed and they can cause a higher incidence of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, obesity, and liver dysfunction. Trans-fats are also found in most fried foods and fast foods.

Packaged deli meats- Nitrates are the biggest concern from highly-processed, packaged deli meats. When meats, like salami and bologna, haven't had time to "cure", they contain the nitrite, NO², which is a carcinogen. It is best to avoid carcinogens in general, but especially while pregnant.

Refined white flour and sugars- White flours and sugars are empty calories. White flour is missing the most nutritious part of the seed. Refined foods can make you feel full, even though you didn't gain any nutrients from the food. They can also cause constipation and make you feel tired. Another problem is that refined foods require more insulin to digest, which could lead to diabetes.

Artificial sweeteners- Studies linking artificial sweeteners, like Aspartame and Splenda™, to cancer are varied and inconclusive. Even though the cancer risk of these substances is still in question, there may be additional links to liver damage, cell production, and metabolic dysfunction. There is a potential that artificial sweeteners, especially Sweet 'N Low, can cross

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the placenta and build up in your baby's developing body. With artificial sweeteners having so much uncertainty around them, it is suggested to avoid them all together or to use it as a treat. If you want to have a Diet soda once a month, then treat it as a special occasion and don't overindulge. Some alternatives for artificial sweeteners include: Stevia (a plant from the mint family), Truvia® (a blend of Stevia and sugar alcohol), honey, agave, or maple syrup.

Additional notes on a variety of diets:

Omnivores:

Just because you can eat anything on a menu or served to you doesn't mean you should. Be sure to avoid too many fried foods, sweets and junk foods. For example, instead of French fries opt for a baked potato instead. Look at the plate- is there a protein, vegetable, and whole grain on it? Is there a sauce on the food? Does it add to the nutritional content or not? Are the vegetables fresh, canned, or frozen? Fresh vegetables and fruits have the highest amount of nutrients, but frozen vegetables and fruits have a significantly higher nutrient value than canned. Another food tip to consider is food safety. Be sure that utensils you use to prepare raw meats are not the same as what is used for vegetables and dairy products. The CDC estimates that about 1 in 6 Americans get a food borne illness each year. Getting sick can pose a significant risk to your unborn child. Prevention is key- find out more about safe food handling techniques at www.fightbac.org

Vegetarians:

Eating dairy and eggs helps boost up your calcium and protein content. The key for a healthy vegetarian diet is variety. Look at the quantity of milk and milk products you consume. If you are having several servings of milk and/or cheese at every meal, you may need to shift your grocery list a bit. Consider trying Almond milk instead of cow's milk on your next trip. You won't miss out on any of the calcium, in fact Almond milk contains 50% more calcium per serving than 1% cow's milk, and you will skip the saturated fat and cholesterol. Be sure you are eating a variety of grains, vegetables, and fruits, and you will be well on your way!

Vegans:

Answer honestly- are you a junk-food vegan or a health-food vegan? It's okay if you fall somewhere in between, but during pregnancy, you will want to lean more towards healthy foods than junk food. Fortunately, the entire produce aisle at the grocery store is vegan as well as grains, nuts, and legumes. Be sure to add dark leafy greens into your meals on a regular basis for calcium and iron. Quinoa is one of my favorite vegan power sources. Not only is it a complete protein, these little seeds are packed with iron and has calcium too. If you aren't already, taking

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a B-complex is essential for all pregnant women. Vegans get very small amounts of some B-vitamins from plants, like B12, but plenty of other B-vitamins like Folic Acid. Adding a B-complex vitamin will boost up the lacking vitamins.

Raw:

You are definitely getting the right amounts of fruits and vegetables in your diet. Your challenge will be to make sure you are eating plenty of calories and protein each day. You also want to make sure to include sprouted grains, nuts, and dark leafy greens. You may want to consider adding a supplement to your routine to make sure you are getting a balance of different nutrients. Vitamin Code for Garden of Life is a raw, food-sourced vitamin. They make a prenatal vitamin, a calcium supplement, and a raw protein powder. Be sure to eat a variety of foods and have snacks available for you often. You will want to be sure to use safe food handling techniques now more than ever. Be sure to get your foods from a quality source and clean it thoroughly. If you include raw meats in your diet, you may want to avoid it while pregnant. Avoiding food borne illnesses is important during pregnancy because E.coli, Salmonella and other bacteria can cause a miscarriage.

"But even with all the diagnostic tests and fancy equipment now available, good nutrition is still the most important factor in giving your baby a healthy start in life."

~Eating Expectantly
Bon Appétit!



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