

# What should I eat — or not eat — during my pregnancy?

While pregnant, you may feel like gobbling up everything in sight. Or, for some, you might not be able to even see or smell foods you've always loved. No worries — your body is undergoing lots of changes.



## How much extra food should I eat during pregnancy?

If you “eat for two,” you’re probably eating too much. Instead of doubling calories, double your attention to healthy eating. During your second trimester, you will need an extra 340 calories every day. In your third, it’s about 450 extra calories. If you’re carrying twins, add 600 calories a day; pregnant with triplets, 900.

## How do I handle morning sickness?

The best way to combat morning sickness tends to be eating. Keep saltines or other crackers on your bedside table. When you wake up, eat one; that will keep you from moving around on an empty stomach, which could worsen your nausea.

Instead of eating three meals a day, eat four or five. Also, take periodic bites of nuts, crackers and fruits such as bananas and oranges. Eating cold foods can help reduce the effects of smells that can trigger morning sickness.

Ginger can help some women deal with morning sickness such as ginger ale or tea made from real ginger.

You should always speak with your health care provider if you are concerned about the frequency of vomiting and nausea as there is a severe form called hyperemesis gravidarum which does require treatment.

## What foods do I especially need?

Pregnant women need what everyone does - a dietary pattern with:

- Plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish and seafood, lean cuts of meat (limiting red and processed meats), low-fat or non fat dairy products
- Limited amounts of added sugar, sodium and saturated fat
- A limited number of refined grains and starches

But during pregnancy, you’ll also need to take a prenatal vitamin to make sure you’re getting enough folic acid, iron and iodine. You’ll need 600 micrograms of folic acid daily during pregnancy (and at least 400 micrograms at least 1 month before pregnancy). Folate and folic acid are in fortified cereals, dark green leafy vegetables (such as spinach), dried beans and lentils, oranges, peanuts and asparagus.

Speaking of vitamins, don’t forget Vitamins A, C, D, B6 and B12.

You’ll also need 1,000 milligrams of calcium, which is in dairy products such as milk, cheese and yogurt; vegetables such as broccoli and kale; and calcium-fortified juice.

Vitamin D and calcium work together to help nourish your baby’s teeth and bones. Aim for 600 international units a day, which is in fatty fish such as salmon as well as milk and eggs.

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Set a daily goal of about 70 grams of protein, which is essential for your baby's growth. You can get it in lean cuts of meat, chicken and fish, and dairy including eggs, milk, yogurt and cottage cheese.

Choline is important for your baby's brain and spinal cord development and can be found in whole eggs, peanuts, beef liver, soy products and milk. Try to consume 450 milligrams.

Also, make sure you're getting enough iron. While pregnant, you'll need twice as much as women who aren't pregnant. Iron is essential for making more blood to bring more oxygen to your baby. Aim for 27 milligrams a day from lean red meat, fortified oatmeal, spinach and beans.

### Are there foods I need to avoid?

Yes, avoid:

- Fish high in mercury (specifically king mackerel, marlin, orange roughy, shark, swordfish, tilefish and bigeye tuna), a metal that's linked to birth defects
  - Instead opt for 2-3 servings (1 serving=about the palm of your hand) a week of fish such as cod, herring, salmon, and tilapia
- Soft, unpasteurized cheeses such as Brie, feta and goat, as they may contain Listeria (a bacteria)
  - Instead opt for pasteurized dairy products
- Deli meats and hot dogs unless reheated; ham, chicken, seafood and other prepared salads; raw or rare meats
- Raw eggs and sprouts
- Refrigerated smoked seafood
- Raw batter



## HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit [goredforwomen.org/Pregnancy](https://www.goredforwomen.org/Pregnancy) to learn more about the connection between pregnancy and cardiovascular risk.
- 2 Connect with other moms who've been where you are and get the support you need by joining our Maternal Health Forum on the Support Network at [goredforwomen.org/MaternalSupport](https://www.goredforwomen.org/MaternalSupport).

## QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR OR NURSE?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

- Should my eating patterns change while I am pregnant?**
- I am a (vegetarian/ pescatarian/vegan). How do I make sure I'm getting the proper nutrition during my pregnancy?**

## MY QUESTIONS:

A healthy pregnancy is best for both mom and baby. We have a library of resources to help you stay safe and healthy before, during and after pregnancy. Visit [goredforwomen.org/Pregnancy](https://www.goredforwomen.org/Pregnancy) to learn more.