

Kellogg's factsheet

Eating for Pregnancy

The changes associated with pregnancy are amongst the most dramatic a woman's body will go through during her lifetime. Eating well before and during pregnancy is important to ensure that both mum and the growing baby receive all of the nutrition that they both will need. Although eating for two, energy needs do not increase significantly and so choosing nutrient dense foods to meet extra vitamin and mineral needs without too many extra calories will help to keep weight gain within normal levels.

Getting it right from the start

To have the most enjoyable pregnancy, it is best to be as fit and healthy as possible from the start. This means regular visits to the doctor and midwife, plenty of fresh air, sensible exercise and a healthy, balanced diet. Even before conception a woman's diet is of utmost importance for the development and overall health of her baby. And don't forget dad's diet and lifestyle before conception are important too – so healthy eating, not smoking, drinking alcohol in moderation and keeping fit apply to him as well.

How much carbohydrate do I need?

The healthiness of a diet is largely related to the relative amounts of carbohydrate, fat and protein consumed. In general the protein content of the diet will tend to stay fairly constant and so only the carbohydrate and fat contents change. These tend to act like a see-saw – as carbohydrate increases fat drops and as carbohydrate drops fat tends to increase¹. The diet for optimal health is one that is high in carbohydrate and low in fat. Recommendations for good health are that carbohydrates should form at least half of energy intakes which in an average diet of 2000kcal is equal to 250g carbohydrates each day².

Healthy food guide for pregnancy

Little and often

The easiest way to ensure that all nutritional needs are met is to eat a healthy balanced diet containing a wide variety of foods. Eating small meals at frequent intervals can often be more comfortable during pregnancy than large infrequent meals. In the early months, this pattern of eating can help reduce the likelihood of morning sickness by maintaining blood sugar levels at a constant level. Towards the end of pregnancy, larger meals can cause discomfort and indigestion.

THE Balance of Good Health

Fruit and vegetables
Choose a wide variety

Bread, other cereals and potatoes
Eat all types and choose high fibre kinds whenever you can



Meat, fish and alternatives
Choose lower fat alternatives whenever you can

Fatty and sugary foods
Try not to eat these too often, and when you do, have small amounts

Milk and dairy foods
Choose lower fat alternatives whenever you can

Eating a variety of foods from the most important food groups should ensure that increased vitamin and mineral needs are met:

Breads and cereals

Starchy carbohydrates such as cereals, bread, potatoes, pasta, rice, and root vegetables provide the body with the most available form of energy as well as many essential vitamins and minerals. Most Kellogg's breakfast cereals are also fortified with 6 B-group vitamins, including folic acid, and the mineral iron, which can help meet the increased requirements of pregnancy. Changing hormone levels can cause constipation and so choosing wholegrain or high fibre versions, and drinking plenty of fluids will help to ease this common problem.

Milk and dairy products

These foods are especially important as they are a rich source of the mineral calcium, which is crucial for the formation of strong healthy bones. Three to four servings per day are recommended (one serving is one third of a pint of milk, a carton of yoghurt or 30g of cheese). Soft and blue veined cheeses such as brie or stilton should be avoided because of potential infection by the bacteria listeria.

Fruit and vegetables

At least five servings per day are recommended. Fruit and vegetables are rich sources of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. Antioxidants come in different colours so choose a colourful selection of fruit and vegetables to get the most from this group.

Meat, fish, poultry and vegetarian alternatives

Two portions of foods from this group per day will provide sufficient protein to cover the needs of both mother and baby. These foods also provide iron. Iron deficiency is common during pregnancy resulting in tiredness and lethargy. Foods, which are especially good sources of iron, are red meat, eggs and pulses such as lentils. Liver and its products such as pâté, should be avoided during pregnancy as they contain very high concentrations of vitamin A which may be harmful to the developing baby. Pregnant women are also advised to avoid eating products made from raw eggs (e.g. home-made mousses, mayonnaise) due to the risk of salmonella. Current advice is to limit intake of tuna and swordfish to no more than two portions each week as these can contain high levels of mercury which may harm baby.

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Getting it right from the start

- Give up smoking as cigarettes contain toxins which can harm the unborn baby
- Limit alcohol to no more than 2 units each week
- Help to alleviate the symptoms of morning sickness by having a small snack in the morning and at bedtime, and eating small, high carbohydrate-containing meals at frequent intervals
- To avoid indigestion, eat small, frequent meals
- Try to have a vitamin C rich food, such as a glass of orange juice, with an iron-rich meal as this will help you to absorb and use the iron
- Eating for two is unnecessary! Keeping to a healthy balanced diet will provide both mother and baby with adequate nutrition for healthy growth. Average weight gain during pregnancy is 10-12kg (22-28lbs)
- Help to avoid constipation by starting the day with a high-fibre cereal, such as a bran or wholegrain type – most Kellogg's cereals are also fortified with 6 B-group vitamins, including folic acid and the mineral iron. In addition choose wholegrain breads and eat plenty of fruit and vegetables.
- Take regular, gentle exercise. Swimming is particularly good as the water supports the body. More information on eating for conception and pregnancy can be found at www.eatwell.gov.uk

1 Department of Health (2000). Report on Health and Social Subjects No.50. Folic acid and the prevention of disease. The Stationery Office. London.