

PREGNANT?

be sure to eat well

A Guide to Healthy Eating during Pregnancy

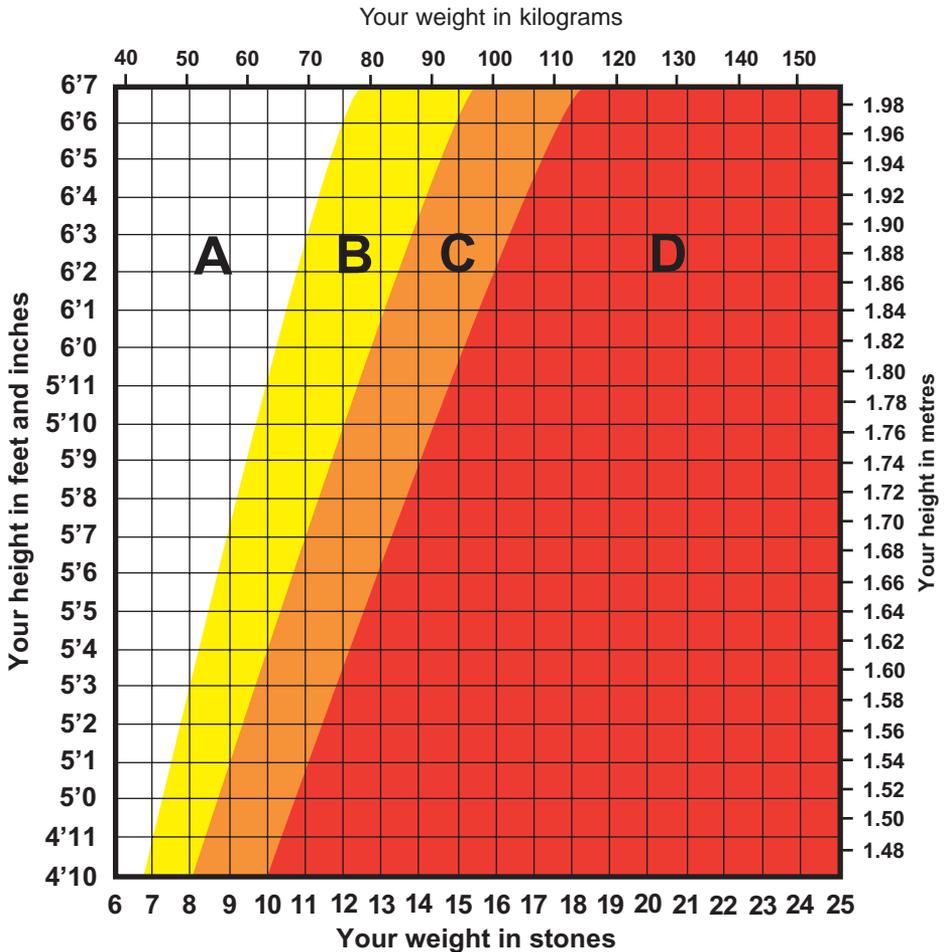


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Weight Gain Chart



Pre-pregnancy weight	Recommended total weight gain	
	kg	lbs
Band A - Underweight	12.5 - 18	28 - 40
Band B - Normal weight	11.5 - 16	25 - 35
Band C - Overweight	7.0 - 11.5	15 - 25
Band D - Very overweight	at least 6	at least 15

Community Dietetics NHS Grampian

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Eating well before and during pregnancy gives your baby a good start in life.

The food you eat during pregnancy should provide all the nutrients that you and your growing baby require. Eating a healthy diet is all that is needed. There is no need to eat for two!

What is healthy eating?

Healthy eating means eating a variety of food from the different food groups each day and eating them in the correct proportions. If you already do this, then you may not have to make any major dietary changes during your pregnancy.

There are, however, some important points to note about the foods you choose and the way in which you handle and prepare your food before eating it. - See page 12 for details.

The picture shows you roughly how much each food group should contribute to your daily food intake.





Bread, cereals, rice, pasta, & potatoes

- Try to eat at least 5 portions of food from this group daily.
- One of these starchy foods should be the main food eaten at each meal.
- Whole grain foods such as cereals, wholemeal and grain breads, and brown rice have more fibre and are good filler foods.
- A bowl of cereal and milk makes an excellent choice for a meal/snack.
- Most breakfast cereals are fortified with vitamins and minerals.

Fruit and vegetables



- Eat fruit and vegetables every day.
- Aim for at least 5 portions daily. Include at least one at every meal.
- Fruit makes a great snack between meals.
- Make a thick vegetable soup, or add extra vegetables to meat, fish, stews, or pasta sauces.
- Use fresh, tinned, dried or frozen.

Meat, fish and alternatives (eggs, beans, pulses, lentils, nuts, soya, tofu, quorn)

- Eat small amounts of these foods in at least 2 meals every day.
- Choose lean cuts of meat and cut off any visible fat.

- Keep processed meat products to a minimum.
- Aim to have at least 2 portions of fish each week.
- Include 1 portion of oily fish, but not more than 2 portions each week.
(oily fish include: salmon, trout, sardines, mackerel, herring, anchovies, and fresh tuna).

Fish – things to be aware of!

Most types of fish are okay to eat during pregnancy but some contain high levels of mercury. For this reason you should:



- Avoid marlin, swordfish and shark.
- Limit tuna to: No more than 2 tuna steaks per week (140g cooked weight or 170g raw weight) Or 4 medium – sized cans of tuna per week (140g drained weight per can).
- Avoid raw shellfish as it may cause food poisoning. Well-cooked shellfish is okay if eaten as part of a hot meal.

Remember there is no limit to the amount of white fish you can eat.



Milk and dairy products

This food group is an excellent source of calcium. Calcium is important for the development of babies' bones and teeth and for maintaining your own.

Aim to:

- Eat 3 portions daily.
1 portion is equivalent to:
200mls milk
1 small pot yogurt
30g cheese

- Choose low fat dairy products e.g. semi-skimmed milk or low fat yogurt.
- Low fat varieties contain as much calcium as full fat varieties.



Fatty and sugary foods

(e.g. sweets, chocolates, cakes, butter, oils, crisps, chips, pastries, butteries, pies)

- These foods contain lots of energy but little nutrients.
- Only eat small amounts.

Caution!

Foods to limit or avoid during pregnancy

During pregnancy it is best to limit or avoid some foods and drinks due to their potential risk to the unborn baby.

Listeria is a bacterium which can cause the illness Listeriosis. This can be harmful to the unborn baby.

Avoid foods which can contain high numbers of the Listeria bacteria. They include:

- Soft ripened cheese e.g. Brie, Camembert, Chevre (a type of goat's cheese).
- Blue veined cheese e.g. Blue Stilton, Danish Blue, Roquefort.
- All unpasteurised dairy products.



- All patés including vegetable paté.
- Ready prepared salads e.g. coleslaw, prewashed salad leaves.
- Take away meals which may have been reheated inadequately.

You **can** eat hard cheese e.g. Cheddar, Cheshire, Parmesan, Feta, Edam, Gouda. Cheese spreads, Ricotta, Mozzarella and cottage cheese are also fine.

Salmonella, which can cause food poisoning, can be found in some eggs. It is best only to use eggs which have been hard boiled or cooked through baking.

- Avoid soft boiled, scrambled, poached, omelettes, lightly fried eggs and dishes containing raw or partly cooked eggs such as home-made mayonnaise, mousse, egg custards, tiramisu.



Shop bought mayonnaise which is made from pasteurised egg is safe to eat but ensure you follow the storage instructions on the jar.

Soft whipped ice cream should also be avoided.

Fish

Some fish should be avoided/limited during pregnancy.

See section on meat, fish and alternatives for more information. (Pages 2&3)



Liver, liver products and supplements containing Vitamin A.

Large amounts of vitamin A in the diet can cause abnormalities in babies.

You should therefore avoid:

- Liver and liver products such as paté, liver sausage.
- Supplements containing Vitamin A or fish liver oil e.g. cod liver oil (which contain high levels of Vitamin A).



Caffeine

High caffeine intakes in pregnant women have been linked to miscarriage and low birth weights. Limit your daily caffeine intake to 300mg or less. This table gives the approximate caffeine content of food and drinks:

Caffeine content -mg

Average cup of instant coffee	75
Average mug of instant coffee	100
Average cup of brewed coffee	100
Average cup of tea	50
1 can regular cola drink	40
1 can energy drink	80
1 bar (50g) plain chocolate	50

(Caffeine in milk chocolate is about half that of plain chocolate).

Remember that some cold and flu remedies also contain caffeine.

Always check with your GP, pharmacist or other health professional before taking any of these products.



Frequently asked Questions

Peanuts

If you, your partner or any close relative have a peanut allergy, asthma, eczema, hayfever or other allergies, you are advised to avoid peanuts and any products containing peanuts during pregnancy and whilst breastfeeding. This is to help prevent your baby developing an allergy to them.

What is folic acid?

Folic acid is the chemical name of one of the B vitamins. It is vital for the growth and health of cells in the body. It has been shown to reduce the risk of neural tube defects such as spina bifida in babies.

During pregnancy, it is difficult to get enough folic acid to meet your requirements from food alone. You should therefore take 400mcg folic acid as a supplement daily up until the 12th week of pregnancy. Ideally you should start taking the supplement before becoming pregnant.

You should also eat foods containing folate (the natural form of folic acid) such as green vegetables, brown rice, fortified breads and breakfast cereals.

I don't drink milk, what alternatives are there?

Milk is a good source of calcium which is needed for the development of your baby's teeth and bones. It also keeps your bones in a healthy state.

If you don't drink milk, try to:



- Use milk in cooking (sauces, puddings) or take it on breakfast cereal.
- Take other dairy products such as yogurt or cheese instead. See section on dairy foods – pages 3-4.
- Take non – dairy sources of calcium instead – this includes bread, porridge, sardines and dried fruit.
- Use calcium enriched soya products.

Is an iron supplement necessary?

Your normal diet should contain enough iron to meet your needs during pregnancy. Good sources of iron which should be included in your daily diet are: red meat, fortified breakfast cereals, dried fruits, green vegetables, eggs, nuts and pulses (lentils, peas and beans). Iron levels are checked during pregnancy and if required, an iron supplement will be prescribed.

Tea prevents the absorption of iron, so don't drink it at mealtimes. Vitamin C aids the absorption of iron, so have fresh fruit, vegetables or fruit juice with your meals.

What about constipation?

Constipation can be helped/avoided by:

- Eating foods which are high in fibre.
- Drinking plenty of fluids.

Each day try to eat:

- 3 slices of wholemeal bread.
- A high fibre breakfast cereal (such as Bran Flakes, Weetabix or All Bran).
- At least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables.
- At least 8-10 cups of fluid (1.5 – 2 litres).

How can I stop feeling sick?

Feeling sick is common in early pregnancy but usually passes by 14 – 16 weeks. The following suggestions may help you to feel better:

- Eat small frequent meals.
- Avoid becoming over hungry.
- Try to have plenty of rest.
- Eat something before getting up in the morning such as toast or a plain biscuit.
- Avoid the smell of cooking food – cold meals/snacks may be better tolerated and can be just as nutritious.
- Try ginger – either as a drink or snack e.g. ginger biscuits, ginger tea.

What about heartburn?

This often occurs later on in pregnancy. The following tips may help to relieve the symptoms:

- Eat small regular meals and snacks.
- Avoid large meals especially late at night.
- Avoid fatty and highly seasoned foods.
- Rest after meals.
- Avoid bending or exercising immediately after a meal.
- Sleep slightly propped up with pillows.



What about alcohol?

It is recommended that you do not drink alcohol if trying to conceive or during pregnancy. If you choose to drink alcohol, to reduce the risk to the baby, you should drink no more than 1 or 2 units of alcohol once or twice a week and should not get drunk.

1 unit of alcohol =

1/2 pint ordinary strength lager, beer, cider

1 single pub measure spirit

1 small glass wine

1 small glass sherry

Remember that pub/home measures are often bigger than those listed here!!

Can I eat honey?

Yes, it is fine to have during pregnancy but should not be given to babies under the age of 1 year.

What weight gain should I expect?

The amount of weight that you are advised to gain during pregnancy depends on your weight before you became pregnant. Use the chart on the back of this leaflet to plot your height and pre-pregnancy weight, and then read what your total weight gain for pregnancy should be.

Most weight is gained during the second half of pregnancy at a rate of about 0.5kg/1 lb per week.

If you are gaining too much weight:

- Cut down on foods high in fat such as crisps, pastries, biscuits and fried food.
- Reduce sugary foods and drinks.
- Fill up on bread, potatoes, fruit and vegetables.
- Continue to take exercise such as walking and swimming.

Do not try to loose weight during pregnancy.

General Food Hygiene

Food Safety and Hygiene is especially important during pregnancy.

- Take chilled or frozen food home quickly and put in your fridge or freezer at once.
- Prepare and store raw and cooked food separately.
- Keep raw meat and fish at the bottom of the fridge.
- Keep the coldest part of your fridge at 0-5°C.
- Check “use by” dates – use food within the recommended period.
- Wash hands thoroughly before preparing food.
- Keep your kitchen clean. Wash worktops and utensils between handling food which is to be cooked and food which is not.
- Keep eggs in the fridge. Do not eat food containing uncooked eggs.
- Cook food well. Follow instructions on the pack. If you reheat food, make sure it is piping hot.
- Wash all fruit, vegetables and salads that will be eaten raw.
- Keep pets away from food, dishes and worktops.
- When gardening or changing cat litter trays, always wear gloves and then wash your hands when finished. This is to avoid an infection (toxoplasmosis) which can harm unborn babies.