

**G**ood eating habits during pregnancy will help make sure both you and your baby are as healthy as possible. Here are some common questions about eating and drinking during pregnancy. The chart on pages 2 and 3 tells you what foods you need for healthy eating and how much of each food is recommended each day. If you have special concerns or needs regarding nutrition, ask about a referral to a dietitian.

## How much weight should I gain?

Most sources recommend that a woman gain between 25 and 35 pounds during pregnancy. Women who were underweight before becoming pregnant may gain more, women who started out overweight may be able to safely gain less. Check with your obstetric provider about the amount of weight gain that is right for you. In general, it's not the number of pounds you gain that is important – it's whether you are eating well and whether your baby is growing as it should.

Most women gain 3-5 pounds during the first 12 weeks, and a little less than a pound a week after that. Remember, you should not diet to lose weight during pregnancy.

If you are concerned that you are gaining too much weight, or not gaining enough, please talk with your obstetric provider. Your pattern of weight gain may be normal for you. Let your provider help you decide what to do.

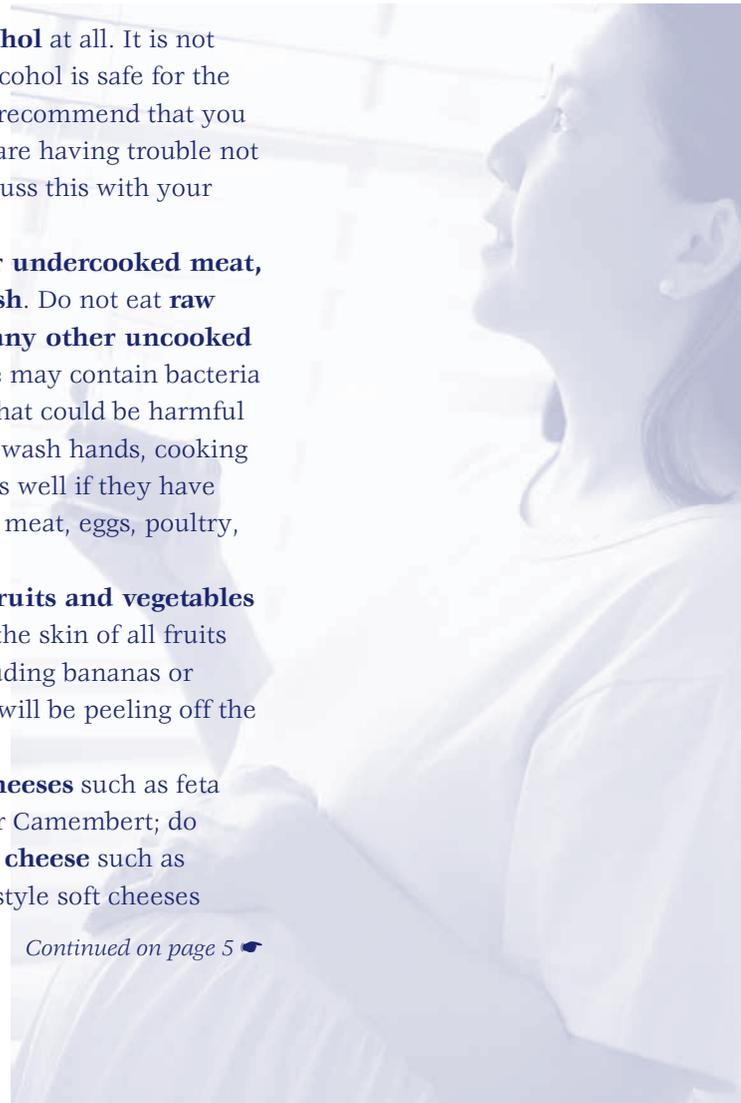
## What precautions must I follow regarding foods or drinks?

There are some precautions you must take regarding what you eat and drink. Some foods may contain bacteria or other organisms that could be harmful to you or your baby. Others foods or drinks have toxic materials that could have harmful effects on your baby's growth and development.

Please follow the guidelines below regarding food and fluids. Ask your doctor if you have any questions.

- ☛ Do not drink **alcohol** at all. It is not known how much alcohol is safe for the unborn baby. So we recommend that you do not drink. If you are having trouble not drinking, please discuss this with your obstetric provider.
- ☛ Do not eat **raw or undercooked meat, eggs, poultry, or fish**. Do not eat **raw clams, oysters, or any other uncooked fish or sushi**. These may contain bacteria or other organisms that could be harmful to your baby. Please wash hands, cooking surfaces, and utensils well if they have been exposed to raw meat, eggs, poultry, or fish.
- ☛ Please **wash all fruits and vegetables** before eating. Wash the skin of all fruits and vegetables, including bananas or melons, even if you will be peeling off the skin before eating.
- ☛ Do not eat **soft cheeses** such as feta (goat cheese), brie or Camembert; do not eat **blue-veined cheese** such as Roquefort. Mexican-style soft cheeses

*Continued on page 5* ➡



# Eating Well During Pregnancy

## What you need

## Where to find it

### Protein

Meat, chicken, fish, liver, eggs, soybeans, peanut butter, dried beans and peas, tofu



### Milk products

Milk, buttermilk, yogurt, cheese (no soft or blue-veined cheese)



### Fruits and vegetables

Sources of Vitamin C

Citrus fruits (oranges, grapefruit), strawberries, tomatoes, peppers, cantaloupe

Leafy green or dark orange vegetables

Spinach, broccoli, carrots, sweet potatoes, dark lettuce, kale, cabbage, collard greens, yams

Other vegetables and fruit

All other vegetables, (cooked or raw), and all other fruit (fresh, canned, or frozen)



### Grain

Bread, cereal, crackers, pasta, rice, cornbread, pancakes, tortillas, wheat germ, grits



### Fluids

Water, milk, herbal teas

## Why you need it

Protein is the building material for the body. It supplies energy and promotes healthy growth and development.

Milk is an excellent source of vitamins, minerals, and protein. It also has calcium, which builds healthy bones and teeth. It is important for the baby's bone development.

Vitamin C is needed to build strong body cells, blood, and healthy gums and teeth.

These vegetables are an important source of Vitamin A. This is needed for healthy development of bones, hair, skin, glands, and vision for your baby.

Also good sources of Vitamin A and other vitamins and minerals.



Whole grain products, such as whole wheat bread, bran cereal, and whole wheat crackers, contain B vitamins. They help your baby to grow and help your body use energy well. Try not to use highly processed grains, like white bread and white rolls. These have lost much of their nutrition.

There are fluids in every cell of your body, and a lot of fluid in your growing baby as well. You must be sure to drink enough during your pregnancy.

## How much you need

### • You need 2 or more servings per day.

One serving is:  
2–3 ounces of cooked meat, fish, or poultry  
(limit fish to 2 servings per week)  
1 cup of cooked dried beans or peas  
2 eggs  
1 cup of tofu  
4 tablespoons of peanut butter

### • You need 4 servings a day

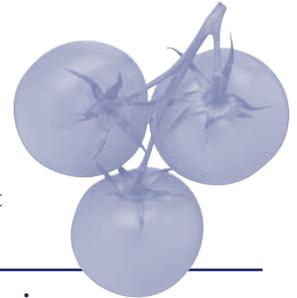
One serving is:  
1 cup of milk or yogurt  
1 ½ ounces of cheese

### • You need at least 1 serving a day of a high-Vitamin C fruit or vegetable.

### • You need at least 1 serving a day of a leafy green or dark orange vegetable.

### • You need a total of at least 5 servings a day of all vegetables and fruits.

One serving is:  
1 cup raw vegetables  
½ cup cooked vegetables  
¾ cup fruit or vegetable juice  
½ cup cooked or canned chopped fruit  
1 medium-sized piece of fruit



### • You need 6-9 servings a day of grain.

One serving is:  
1 slice of bread  
1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal  
½ cup cooked cereal, rice, or pasta

### • You need 8-10 glasses a day, 8 ounces each glass.

# A Special Note About Vitamin Supplements, Iron, and Folic Acid (Folate)

Prenatal vitamins are recommended by almost all obstetric providers as a way of making sure you get the nutritional support that both you and your baby need. But some women prefer not to take prenatal vitamins, or find that certain types of vitamins (such as those with iron) cause unpleasant side effects.

Most women are able to take in nearly everything they need for a healthy pregnancy by following a healthy, well-balanced diet, as described in the attached chart. However, there are two important exceptions.

## **Folic acid**

Folic acid, or folate, has been found to be important in preventing the development of a group of birth defects called neural tube defects. Examples of neural tube defects are spina bifida and anencephaly. Folic acid is also needed by both you and your baby to form red blood cells.

While you are pregnant, your need for folic acid is at least 600 micrograms (mcgs.) per day. It can be difficult to take in this much folic acid through diet alone. This is one important reason why prenatal vitamins, which contain the full requirement of folic acid (or more), are almost always recommended in pregnancy.

## **Folic acid**

- You need at least 600 micrograms.
- Most prenatal vitamins have between 600 and 800 micrograms; some have 1 milligram, which is 1000 micrograms.

## **Iron**

Your need for iron begins in the first trimester, and continues through childbirth. Iron is an important part of the body's blood cells. It is needed during pregnancy to form red blood cells in both you and your baby. However, because of loss of iron with the monthly periods, many women enter pregnancy low on iron. This can lead to low red blood cell counts, which is not good for you or your baby.

Your provider may recommend that you take an iron supplement or a prenatal vitamin that includes a certain amount of iron. If you are not taking iron supplements, please make sure that foods high in iron are a regular part of your diet. Some foods rich in iron are listed in the chart to the right. Your obstetric provider will routinely check your red blood cell counts to make sure you are getting enough iron.

## **Food sources of iron**

- beef, chicken, turkey
- tuna
- shrimp
- beans – black, navy, kidney, pinto beans, and chick peas
- tofu
- apricots
- spinach
- swiss chard
- collard greens
- broccoli
- enriched breads and cereals
- egg yolk
- blackstrap molasses
- pumpkin seeds
- prunes
- kale
- wheat germ
- whole grains

## Continued from Page 1

should also not be eaten including queso blanco, queso fresco, queso de hoja, queso de crema, and asadero. Semi-soft and hard cheese, such as mozzarella, parmesan, Swiss, and cheddar, are okay. Processed cheeses and cottage cheese are also safe.

☛ Do not drink **unpasteurized milk or fruit juices**.

☛ Do not eat **raw honey**.

☛ You must **heat until steaming hot all hot dogs, luncheon meats, or deli meats** (such as bologna) as these can also contain bacteria that can be harmful.

☛ Do not eat **non-cooked, processed (smoked), or refrigerated pate or meat spreads**.

☛ Do not eat **refrigerated smoked seafood** (most often labeled “nova-style,” “lox,” “kippered,” “smoked,” or “jerky”).

☛ Please **limit the amount of caffeine** in your diet. Most people get caffeine from coffee or cola drinks. Caffeine is also found in chocolate, tea, and some over-the-counter medicines.

☛ Please limit your use of **Aspartame, or Nutrasweet**. This is a sweetener found in most low-calorie foods and drinks.

☛ Although **fish** is an excellent source of protein that is low in fat, pregnant women need to **be cautious about the types and amounts of fish** they eat because of mercury and PCB contamination.

Nearly all fish contain some amount of mercury. Long-lived, larger fish have the highest levels and should not be eaten during pregnancy. These include: **shark, swordfish, king mackerel, tuna steak, and tilefish. Lobster tomalley** – the soft green substance found in the tail and body section of a lobster – should not be eaten by anyone.

☛ **Canned tuna** may be eaten, but please use the “light” variety (not “chunk” or “albacore”) and limit your intake to two servings a week.

☛ Pregnant women should not eat **freshwater fish or bluefish**.

☛ The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) publishes additional cautions and guidelines for pregnant women on the consumption of **lobster, bivalves** (such as **mussels, oysters, scallops, and clams**), **flounder, shellfish**, and other species. For more information, please call 617-624-5757.

☛ Please ask your doctor if you have questions about fish consumption. Please note that your total intake of any safe **fish should be limited to two servings a week**.

### **I have a lot of nausea and vomiting. What should I do?**

Many women have nausea and vomiting early in pregnancy. In most cases, this is easily managed with some changes in diet and, in severe cases, the use of anti-nausea medicine (if prescribed by your provider). Nausea and vomiting usually pass after about 12 weeks.

Women sometimes find that eating dry carbohydrates, like toast, crackers, or rice, helps decrease nausea. You may want to try an acupressure wristband (available at many pharmacies), which is designed to treat nausea and is often used to prevent motion sickness. Some providers recommend the use of Vitamin B-6 as a treatment for nausea.

Ginger in the diet may help. Talk with your provider about whether this is



*Continued on back* ➡



recommended for you, and, if so, what the appropriate dose of ginger should be.

Keeping a small amount of food in the stomach at all times works well for some women. Try to eat something any time you feel hungry. Listen to your body, and don't be overly concerned about gaining weight. Taking in small, healthy snacks every few hours throughout the day may help you avoid nausea. Try to stay away from strong odors, and spicy, greasy, or acidic foods.

In rare cases, these measures are not effective and nausea and vomiting are severe. If you are not able to hold anything down for 24 hours, please call your obstetric provider. You could become dehydrated, which is not good for you or your baby. Your provider may prescribe medicine to help control vomiting, and may want you to visit the hospital for intravenous (IV) fluids to prevent dehydration.

Try to remember that the nausea and vomiting of pregnancy nearly always subside after the first few months. Stay in touch with your obstetric provider for additional advice about how to manage until this phase of pregnancy passes.

### **Do I need to take prenatal vitamins?**

Almost all providers recommend that pregnant women take prenatal vitamins. Research has shown that, even with a healthy diet, some important nutrients are difficult to get through diet alone. An important example is folic acid, which is needed in large quantities during pregnancy in order to prevent birth

defects involving the brain and spinal column. Iron is also a substance that is difficult for some women to get in the right amounts through diet alone.

Prenatal vitamins come in many different forms, including tablets, chewable tablets, and liquid. You can buy them without a prescription, though prescription brands are also available. In some cases, insurance covers most of the cost of the prescription brand; in other cases, buying the non-prescription strength is less expensive. Either type is equally good for you and your baby. But you must be sure to take vitamins labeled "prenatal," or, if you prefer another type, you must make sure your vitamin has at least 600 micrograms (mcgs.) of folic acid (folate).

### **What is W.I.C.?**

If you find that buying enough nutritious food is difficult on your budget, the W.I.C. program may be able to help. W.I.C. stands for "Women, Infants, and Children." It is a nationally-funded program that helps ensure that pregnant or breast-feeding mothers and their children get the nutrition they need. To qualify for W.I.C., you have to show that your income is below a certain level.

If you are interested in this program, your obstetric provider can fill out a form for you. Call 800-WIC-1007 (800-942-1007) to find out where there is a W.I.C. office near you, or visit [www.mass.gov/wic](http://www.mass.gov/wic). You will need to make an appointment at the W.I.C. office to be enrolled in the program.