



Nutrition

Guide to healthy eating in pregnancy

- Eating “well” does not mean “eating for two” – quality is better than quantity
- Consider a multivitamin supplement before and for the first 3 months of pregnancy
- Try to eat foods of various colours, from different food groups
- Eat at least 5 portions of fresh fruit and vegetables daily
- Drink at least eight glasses of water a day - but there is no need to drink lots of milk
- Oily fish increases essential fatty acids, preventing premature labour
- Sardines, once a week, may prevent your baby developing eyesight problems
- Reduce consumption of tea, coffee, alcohol and cola
- Reduce intake of animal fat, red meat, salt, sugar, stimulants, processed foods and additives
- Avoid nuts, if you have a family history of nut allergy
- Avoid unpasteurised milk, soft cheeses, eg Brie, and ensure eggs are thoroughly cooked
- Avoid tuna, shark, marlin and swordfish which contain high levels of mercury



- Weight gain of more than about 16kg increases tiredness, backache, oedema (swollen ankles), high blood pressure and long-term obesity
- Dieting to lose weight is not recommended except under medical supervision, and does not mean your baby will be smaller and therefore make labour easier
- Stop or reduce smoking!

Essential food groups for a healthy diet

- Proteins for growth and development of blood cells, hormones, antibodies to fight infection, wound healing and haemoglobin which carries oxygen round your body. Proteins are found in meat, poultry, fish, cheese, milk, eggs, beans, peas, corn, wheat products, grains, seeds, nuts, brewer's yeast and soya
- Carbohydrates provide energy, aid digestion and maintain a balance between healthy bacteria and those which cause infections. Half of your food intake should be carbohydrates, which are found in bread, pasta, flour, cereals, potatoes, bananas, beetroot, dates, figs, sauces and flavourings.
- Essential fatty acids aid energy production, heat insulation, absorption of vitamins and calcium and help to form cell walls. Unsaturated fatty acids, particularly poly-unsaturated, are better than saturated fats, and occur in fish oils and vegetable oils, especially safflower and sunflower. Saturated fats occur in butter, lard, meat fat, palm and coconut oil, margarine and vegetable shortening and should be eaten in small amounts.
- Vitamins, especially A, B, C, D, E, and minerals including calcium, folic acid, iron, zinc, magnesium, selenium assist in many body functions; insufficient levels can lead to ill health and medical conditions.



Vitamin / mineral	Required for	Foods
A	growth / repair of cells, fighting infection, healthy eyes, especially night vision, protein digestion, removal of toxins	liver, kidneys, eggs, dairy produce, apricots, carrots, broccoli, parsley, yellow / green leafy vegetables, fish oils
B1	maintaining healthy nerves, heart muscle, digestive tissues, carbohydrate digestion	whole grains, nuts, seeds, eg sunflower, brewer's yeast, green vegetables, liver, kidneys, fish, eggs, milk

B2	fat, protein, carbohydrate breakdown, wound healing, hormone regulation, growth & development of your baby	whole grains, nuts, seeds, egg sunflower, brewer's yeast, green vegetables, liver, kidneys, fish, eggs, milk
B3	converting food into energy, hormone regulation, digestion of fats, proteins, carbohydrates	lean meat, poultry, fish, liver, grains, yeast, butter
B6	protein digestion, antibody and red blood cell production, release of stored sugars, healthy teeth and gums, development of nervous system	bananas, grapefruit, prunes, raisins plus foods which contain other B vitamins
B12	bone marrow and red blood cell production, nervous system functioning, cell formation, carbohydrate digestion	liver, kidney, fish, shellfish (but avoid too much shellfish in pregnancy)
C	cell, tissue, nerve, tooth & bone health, wound healing, absorption of iron from food	oranges, lemons, limes, grapefruit, tangerines, berries, blackcurrants, melons, tomatoes, potatoes, parsley, green vegetables (destroyed by cooking)
D	calcium production for healthy bones & teeth, blood clotting, kidneys, heart & nervous system function	sunshine (main source), fish liver oils, liver, brewer's yeast, tuna, avocados
E	major body functions including reproduction, responding to stress, slows ageing process	whole grains, eggs, leafy greens, broccoli, cabbage, avocados, nuts, liver, kidneys, cold-pressed vegetable oils
Folic acid	production of red and white blood cells and certain chemicals, nervous & digestive system function, essential for development of your baby's spine	leafy greens, whole grains, nuts, oranges, broccoli, tuna, liver, kidney
Calcium	bones & teeth, absorption of iron, blood clotting, regulation of heart rhythm	milk & dairy products - yogurt, egg yolk, sardine (with bones), salmon, green beans, bone marrow, tofu, soybeans

Zinc	cell development in brain, thyroid gland, liver, kidneys, lungs, growth of skeleton, skin, hair, wound healing & reproduction – requirements increase by 30% in pregnancy	herrings, oysters, fish bones, liver, red meat & bones, eggs, milk, nuts, whole grains, mushrooms, leafy green vegetables, paprika
Iron	formation of haemoglobin in red blood cells, to transport oxygen round body, bone growth, resistance to disease, utilisation of protein NB iron supplements are not normally needed in pregnancy unless you become anaemic	red meat, liver, sardines & other small fish, eggs, especially yolks, wholemeal bread & cereals, chapatis, oatcakes, potatoes, parsley, chives, spinach, dried fruits, nuts, cherries, soya beans, red kidney beans, lentils, chick peas

Always inform your midwife if you are taking any nutritional supplements or seeing a nutritionist during pregnancy

For more individualised information on diet and nutrition in pregnancy and childbirth, telephone **0906 400 6227** (calls charged at £1.50 per minute, from a BT landline; calls from mobiles and other networks may vary).