



Pregnancy Nutrition

Carly Zuwiala, M.D.

Pregnancy is a time of physical and emotional changes for all women. Being mindful of nutrition during this time can help you have a healthier pregnancy and healthier baby. Though well-meaning relatives may tell you to “eat for two” and stock up on ice cream, there’s much more to pregnancy nutrition than that.

Maintaining a healthy weight during pregnancy is important because excessive weight gain can contribute to postpartum weight retention. Of course, a healthy pregnancy does involve some weight gain. So how do you know when it’s too much? According to the National Academy of Medicine, recommended weight gain during pregnancy is 28-40lb for underweight women (BMI<18.5), 25-35lb for women of normal weight (BMI 18.5-24.9), 15-25lbs for overweight women (BMI 25-29.9) and 11-20lbs for obese women (BMI >30).

It may be confusing knowing how to maintain a healthy weight during pregnancy, especially when it’s constantly going up. The basic guidelines for additional calorie consumption are as follows: the recommended increased caloric intake is 0 calories in the first trimester, 350 calories (equivalent to a peanut butter and jelly sandwich) and 450 additional calories in the third trimester. If you’re not sure if you’re hitting your calorie goals, try tracking your calories for a few days to determine how much extra you’re eating.

The best diet for a pregnant woman is one full of nutritionally diverse foods. Protein requirements increase in pregnancy for fetal, placental and maternal tissue development, so be sure to find healthy ways to increase this nutrient in your diet. Some great sources of protein are lean meats, fish and nuts. Many women are wary about eating fish during pregnancy, but two to three servings of low-mercury fish per week is a great source of protein and DHA and omega-3 fats, which have been shown to improve neurodevelopment in children.

Just like there are healthy foods you’ll want to include in your diet, there are also some to avoid. Most of these on the “no list” are due to their increased risk to cause foodborne illnesses. Foods like undercooked/raw meat, unpasteurized dairy products, raw sprouts, unwashed vegetables, unheated deli meats and raw/undercooked fish all pose a risk for illnesses like listeria and toxoplasmosis.

In addition to eating healthy, one important aspect of prenatal nutrition is to take a good quality prenatal vitamin as well as folic acid supplementation. It has long been recognized that folic acid supplementation decreases isolated neural tube defects. If you’re planning to become pregnant, you should actually plan to start taking a folic acid supplement a month before you even become pregnant. Then continue taking it throughout the first trimester of pregnancy.

A stronger and healthier mother results in an easier and more enjoyable pregnancy!

If you have any questions about pregnancy nutrition and weight management, make an appointment today at WHS OB/GYN Care at (724) 225-3640.



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