

Pregnancy

Prenatal Precautions

Vitamins and minerals are important during pregnancy but some need special attention, especially those that promote cell division and the formation of new life. A varied and balanced approach to eating is the best way to get the vitamins and minerals you and your baby need.

- Folate is important before conception and during the first three months. It is especially critical for lowering a newborn's risk for neural tube, or spinal cord, damage.
- Iron needs increase during pregnancy by about 50 percent because iron is essential in making the component of blood that carries oxygen throughout your body, including to the placenta for your baby.
- Vitamin C helps your body absorb the needed iron.
- Calcium is needed for two reasons: your baby's developing bones and preserving your own bone mass. Without enough calcium, your body will draw calcium from your bones to build your baby's bones.
- Vitamin D helps your body absorb the calcium you need during pregnancy.

Weight Gain

There is no set amount for all women. Because every pregnant woman is unique, your doctor will advise you about the weight-gain range that's right for you. That advice depends on:

- Your weight before pregnancy
- Your height
- Your age
- If you're expecting multiples.

Excessive weight gain during pregnancy can lead to a difficult delivery, back and joint problems, gestational diabetes and postpartum weight gain.

Gestational Diabetes

Gestational diabetes is a health problem for approximately 4% of pregnant women, though its cause is unknown.

Risk factors include a family history of diabetes, being obese, a problem pregnancy and being over age 40. Most pregnant women are routinely tested for gestational diabetes at about 24 to 28 weeks. The risk for developing diabetes later in life is higher among women who have had gestational diabetes.

But don't fear: Even if you have gestational diabetes, you can deliver a healthy baby. It's important for you and your doctor to monitor it carefully.

Food Safety

When women are pregnant, their risk of developing food borne illness increases and even a mild case of food poisoning can have serious consequences. Protect yourself and your unborn infant from food borne illness by practicing good food safety habits.

Do not eat meats, poultry, seafood and eggs that are raw or undercooked. Also, unpasteurized dairy products like raw milk and some imported cheeses can pose safety threats to pregnant women.

Pregnant and nursing women can eat fish, but not long-lived fish — such as swordfish, shark, king mackerel and tilefish — because of the methyl mercury they may contain. Pregnant women should also pass on raw seafood.

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