

Nutrition During Pregnancy

Introduction:

Maintaining good nutrition and a healthy diet during pregnancy is critical for the health of the mother and unborn child. It is also good to remember that the quality of the food is more important than the quantity, so it is recommended to choose healthy foods with high nutritional value, and avoid unhealthy foods.

The importance of maintaining good nutrition during pregnancy:

- Boosting the development of fetal bones and blood cells.
- Reducing the pains and discomforts of pregnancy.
- Boosting the immunity to prevent catching infectious diseases.
- Preventing iron deficiency anemia.
- Strengthening the body in preparation for childbirth.
- Boosting milk production for breastfeeding.

Weight gain during pregnancy:

Healthy weight gain varies according to the mother's pre-pregnancy body mass index (BMI) and health. If her BMI before pregnancy was in the normal range, it is recommended to gain 11 to 15 kg during pregnancy.

How to calculate your body mass index (BMI):

$BMI = \text{Weight (kg)} / \text{Height (m)}^2$

(Person's weight in kilograms divided by the square of the person's height in meters)

Body Mass Index	Classification
Less than 18.5	Underweight
18.5-24.9	Normal (healthy weight)
25-29.9	Overweight
30-34.9	Obese Class I (Moderately obese)
35-39.9	Obese Class II (Severely obese)
40 and above	Obese Class III (Very severely obese)

Calories:

The doctor should be consulted to discuss the needed daily calorie intake in general, as every woman, and every pregnancy is different, but commonly the increase in calorie intake during pregnancy is as follows:

- During the first trimester of pregnancy: Usual pre-pregnancy calorie intake, and there are no drastic changes in the dietary needs.
- During the second and third trimester of pregnancy: An additional 300 calories are needed.

The effect of obesity on pregnancy:

If the body mass index is higher than the normal range and is within the range of obesity, it negatively affects pregnancy, Obesity in pregnant women increases the risk of developing the following health issues:

- Gestational diabetes.
- High blood pressure
- Toxaemia of pregnancy.
- Preterm birth.
- Cesarean delivery.

Additionally, babies may develop the following problems:

- Congenital defects.
- Enlargement in the size of the fetus (gigantism), with the possibility of injury during childbirth.
- Obesity in childhood.

Nutrient requirements during pregnancy:

Nutrient	Recommended daily amount of intake	Sources:
Proteins	70 grams	Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, dairy products, legumes, and nuts.
Calcium	1200 milligrams	Dairy products, leafy green vegetables, orange juice, and almonds.
Iron	30 milligrams	Meat, fish, poultry, cereals, whole grain breads, legumes, leafy green vegetables, dried peaches, apricots and raisins.
Folacin (Folic Acid)	600 micrograms	Leafy green vegetables, legumes, whole grains, orange juice, asparagus.
Pyridoxine (B6)	1.9 milligrams	Wheat germ, meat, whole grains, cauliflower, bananas, avocados, peanuts, sunflower seeds, soybeans, and corn.
Zinc	15 milligrams	The same foods that contain iron, in addition to oysters, wheat germ and brown rice.

- Vitamin (A): Pregnant women need 770 micrograms of vitamin (A) per day.
- Vitamin (C): The recommended daily amount of vitamin C during pregnancy increases to 85 milligrams
- Vitamin (D): All individuals under the age of 70, including pregnant women and breastfeeding women, need 600 IUs per day.

Recommended foods:

- **Proteins:** It is recommended to get proteins from lean meat (such as: Chicken, fish, legumes, etc.) daily.
- **Carbohydrates:** (such as: Bread, cereals, potatoes, rice and pasta).
- **Fat:** It is recommended to get fat from plant sources (like: olive oil), and avoid saturated fats from animal sources (like: butter).
- **Pasteurized dairy products:** (such as: Yogurt, milk and cheese).
- **Vitamins and minerals.**
- Large amounts of **fiber**.

Foods to avoid:

- It is important to avoid **uncooked meat or eggs**; because they may contain the Listeria bacteria that can be transmitted to the fetus through the placenta causing miscarriage, or stillbirth.
- **Fish:**
 - ✓ It is recommended to avoid raw fish or oysters that may contain germs (bacteria, viruses or parasites).
 - ✓ Certain species of fish should be avoided because they contain a high levels of mercury that can damage the nervous system of the fetus (like: shark, swordfish, and marlin).
 - ✓ It is advisable to limit tuna intake to no more than four medium-sized cans per week (net weight = 140 g per can).
 - ✓ Some types of oily fish that may contain chemicals from pollution. These chemicals may accumulate in the body over time and be harmful, so it is recommended not to consume more than two servings a week (such as: Mackerel, sardines, salmon and fresh tuna (canned tuna is not considered an oily fish).
- **Caffeine:** A substance found naturally in foods (such as: Tea, coffee and chocolate), as well as some soft drinks, energy drinks and some painkillers. It is recommended to reduce caffeine intake during pregnancy, because too much caffeine increases the risk of miscarriage and low birth weight.
- Unpasteurized milk and all its products.

Dietary supplements:

- **Good dietary supplements:**
 - ✓ Iron: To protect the mother from iron deficiency anemia, and to help with transferring more blood to supply the largest amount of oxygen to the fetus.
 - ✓ Folic Acid: To protect the fetus from developing spina bifida.
 - **Harmful dietary supplements:**
 - ✓ It is advisable to avoid vitamin A supplements either in food or supplement tablets because it may harm the fetus.
- Dietary supplements are insufficient to replace healthy nutrition.

Food poisoning:

A pain in the gut accompanied by diarrhea and vomiting, caused by a bacterial infection or bacteria in the stomach. To avoid food poisoning it is advised to do the following:

- Make sure that food and meat are well-cooked.
- Make sure to wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly.
- Keep the kitchen and the eating and cooking utensils very clean.
- Wash your hands after going to the bathroom, before and after eating, after handling raw meat, and after touching animals.

General Guidelines:

- Fried foods should be avoided and replaced with grilled foods.
- It is recommended to eat thoroughly washed fruits and vegetables.
- Starting a diet to lose weight during pregnancy should be avoided, because it may prevent the mother and fetus from getting important nutrients.
- It is advisable to limit your salt intake, as it causes fluid retention, which leads to high blood pressure.

Frequently Asked Questions:

- **Can honey cause miscarriage?**
Consuming honey does not cause miscarriage
- **Can cinnamon cause miscarriage?**
Cinnamon powder is rich in coumarin, which causes contractions in the uterus, significantly increasing the risk of miscarriage.

Misconceptions:

- **Pregnant women are eating for two.**
Truth: Pregnant women should focus on the quality of the food that is good for the fetus and not its quantity.
- **Caffeine intake (found in coffee, tea, etc.) should be stopped altogether during pregnancy.**
Truth: It is recommended to reduce caffeine intake as much as possible, especially during the first trimester of the pregnancy, i.e. the first three months of fetal development.

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For further questions kindly contact us via email:

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