



good food

for mums to be

“Your baby’s only source
of food comes from
what you eat and drink.”

Healthy eating is important throughout life. Now that you are pregnant it is even more important. Your baby's only source of food comes from what you eat and drink.



what should I eat?

Every day you need a variety of foods from each of the food groups



fruit and vegetables

Aim for 5 portions daily. At least one of these should be a source of vitamin C (helps iron absorption), eg. 1 orange, ½ grapefruit, 2 kiwi fruit, small glass of pure orange juice. Eat foods rich in folate, such as dark green vegetables and oranges, regularly. Folate is important in helping to prevent spina bifida. For more information see section on vitamin supplements.

bread, other cereals and potatoes

These foods should form the main part of each meal. They are a good source of energy, vitamins and minerals, including iron. The high fibre, wholegrain varieties help avoid constipation. Choose breakfast cereals with added vitamins (especially folate) and minerals.



milk and dairy foods

Try to include one pint of milk, or its equivalent in other dairy foods.

200mls milk = 150g carton yogurt = 30g (1oz) piece of cheese

(See Food Safety advice for cheeses to avoid).

The calcium in milk is needed for forming bones.

Note: Fermented milk drinks (eg. Yakult, Vitality, Actimel, etc) are safe to take in pregnancy, however they only contain very small amounts of calcium.

foods containing fat, foods containing sugar

Go easy! These foods are high in fat and sugar and can lead you to gain extra weight, which may be difficult to lose again after your baby is born.



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what should I eat?

meat, fish, and alternatives

Choose two of these products per day. Try to eat red meat regularly as it contains iron which is important for healthy blood. Other sources of iron include pilchards, beans, lentils, eggs, nuts (see Food Safety advice), wholemeal bread, breakfast cereals with added iron, green vegetables and dried fruit.



Aim to have fish twice a week, one of these should be oily fish. Oily fish such as salmon, fresh tuna, mackerel, herring and pilchards contain omega 3 fatty acids, which are needed for brain and nerve development. If you want to take a fish oil supplement instead, discuss this with your doctor.

Tuna should be limited to 2 fresh steaks (140g cooked weight each) or 4 medium tins per week (drained weight of 140g each).



avoid

eating liver, or liver products, eg. pâté, liver sausage, as these are high in vitamin A. Too much vitamin A can be harmful to your baby. Avoid shark, swordfish and marlin as they are high in methylmercury, which can be harmful to unborn babies.










what about fluids?

Drink 8-10 cups or glasses per day to ensure a good fluid intake and prevent constipation. Try drinking more water or diluted juice to improve your fluid intake.

A **high intake** of caffeine, found in coffee, tea, chocolate, some soft drinks and “energy” drinks has been linked to low birth weight babies and also miscarriage.

It is advisable to limit your intake of caffeine to no more than 200mg per day. **It is not necessary to avoid it altogether.**

As a guide

1 mug  instant coffee	1 cup  tea	1 can  cola	1 can  energy drink	50g bar  chocolate
100mg	50mg	40mg	80mg	50mg

The above caffeine contents are approximate

alcohol, smoking & drugs

The best advice is to avoid drinking alcohol when you are pregnant. If you do decide to drink make sure it is no more than 1 or 2 units, once or twice a week and do not get drunk.
1 unit = ½ pint beer (average strength);
1 small glass of wine (125mls) = 1½ units.

Avoid smoking during pregnancy and also breathing in other people's smoke (passive smoking).

Drugs and other harmful substances, e.g. glue, should be avoided as these can affect the development of your unborn baby.

Check with your GP if you are on prescription drugs/medication.



vitamin supplements

and over the counter medicines



During the first twelve weeks of pregnancy you should take a 400micrograms (mcg) supplement of folic acid every day, as well as eating foods rich in folate (see fruit and vegetables and cereals). If you have a family history of spina bifida or suffer from epilepsy, coeliac disease or diabetes, please contact your doctor for further advice.

Vitamin D

The Department of Health now recommends that pregnant women take an extra 10µg Vitamin D as a daily supplement. This is of particular importance to women of Asian, African and Middle Eastern origin. See your doctor or midwife for further advice.

advice

Do not take any medicines, tablets, or vitamin supplements, especially those containing vitamin A, unless advised to do so by your doctor, midwife or pharmacist.

possible food problems & solutions

in pregnancy

nausea and vomiting

- Eat small meals often eg. toast, milk, fruit.
- Avoid fried foods.
- In general most people find that avoiding fizzy drinks helps. However, some people find that slowly sipping a fizzy drink may help to relieve nausea.
- A dry biscuit on its own 10 minutes before getting up may help morning sickness.
- Suck something sour, eg. a slice of lemon.
- Relax and rest.
- Get into the fresh air as much as possible.
- Travel sickness bands may help.
- Cold foods rather than hot foods may be easier to manage.
- Ginger, eg. ginger biscuits, ginger drinks, may be helpful.





possible food problems & solutions

in pregnancy

constipation

- Eat wholegrain breads and cereals, eg. Weetabix, Bran Flakes, porridge.
- Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables.
- Drink 8 -10 cups of fluid a day.

heartburn

- Eat small meals often.
- Avoid fried or spicy foods.
- Don't bend over or lie down too soon after eating.
- Sleep propped up on extra pillows.



weight gain

The total amount of weight gained varies from one woman to another. The average weight gain is around 10-12kg (approx. 1½ – 2stone) over the whole pregnancy. If you are either overweight or underweight advice on weight gain may be adapted to suit you. Gaining too much weight can affect your health and increase your blood pressure. However it is just as important not to diet and trying to lose weight during pregnancy is not recommended.

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food safety

- Avoid raw or lightly cooked eggs OR foods containing them.
- Avoid pâté, liver and liver sausage.
- Avoid soft mould-ripened cheese, eg. Brie, Camembert, Chèvre and blue-veined cheeses.
- Avoid unpasteurised milk and products made from it.
- Avoid raw shellfish, eg. oysters.
- Avoid ready prepared salads, eg. coleslaw, and prewashed salad leaves.

General food safety advice

- Keep raw meat and poultry covered and store on the bottom shelf of your fridge.
- Allow frozen poultry to defrost completely before cooking.
- Cook food thoroughly.
- Re-heat ready prepared meals and poultry until they are piping hot.
- Cool cooked foods quickly if they are not going to be eaten straight away.
- Wash all fruit and vegetables thoroughly.
- Eat foods before the “use by” date.

Some health problems, including certain infections, have been linked to food eaten during pregnancy. To help avoid these follow the advice below:

- Avoid foods that can easily be contaminated with bacteria, eg. ready made salads, coleslaw, soft whipped ice cream.
- Wash hands before preparing, and again after, handling raw food.
- Store foods at the correct temperature. Keep fridge temperature between 1-5°C.
- Make sure when buying ready-made sandwiches that they are stored correctly.



A word about nuts

Since August 2009 Government advice about eating peanuts during pregnancy has changed. It is not clear from the latest science if eating peanuts during pregnancy (or not eating them) affects the chances of your baby developing a peanut allergy. The current advice is that if you wish, you can choose to eat peanuts or foods containing them, unless you are allergic to them yourself.

If you are not sure how foods have been prepared, stored or if they contain ingredients such as raw egg it is probably best to avoid them. If you have any questions about your diet please contact your midwife, health visitor or dietitian.



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