

Eating Healthy Foods When You Are Pregnant: Brief Version

When you are pregnant, you need to eat healthy foods to help you and your growing baby stay healthy. Eating right can also help you feel better.

The best time to start eating a healthy, balanced diet is before you get pregnant.

If it is hard for you to afford healthy foods, talk to your healthcare provider about it. He or she may know about government programs that can help.

What foods do I need to eat?

What you eat gives your baby what he or she needs to grow. When you eat healthy foods, you give your baby strong bones and teeth, healthy skin, and a healthy body. Eating right keeps you healthy, too.

Here's what you should eat every day.

Meat Group (protein) foods: 5 and 1/2 to 7 ounces (oz) a day

One ounce of protein is equal to:

- 1 oz of lean meat, poultry, or fish
- 1 egg or 2 egg whites
- 1/2 cup cooked dried beans
- 1/2 cup tofu
- 1/4 cup nuts
- 2 tablespoon peanut butter

Grains: 6 to 8 oz every day

One ounce of grains is equal to:

- 1/2 cup pasta
- 1/2 cup cooked cereal
- 1/2 cup brown rice
- 1 slice of bread

Whole grains are best.

Fruits: 2 cups every day

One half cup is equal to:

- 1 small banana or round fresh fruit
- 1/2 cup fruit juice
- 1/2 cup fresh, frozen, or canned fruit
- 1/4 cup dried fruit
- 16 grapes

Vegetables: 2 and 1/2 to 3 cups every day

1 cup of vegetables is equal to:

- 1 cup raw or cooked vegetables
- 1 cup vegetable juice
- 2 cups raw leafy greens

Dairy (Milk) Products: 3 cups every day

1 cup of dairy product is equal to:

- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup yogurt
- 1 and 1/2 oz of hard cheese
- 2 oz of processed cheese

Choose products that are nonfat or low fat.

Vitamins: Your healthcare provider will most likely prescribe prenatal vitamin pills. This will help make sure you get the vitamins and minerals you need.

What can I do if I'm having trouble eating?

If you have nausea or vomiting, it may help to:

- Eat crackers, pretzels, or dry cereal before you get up in the morning.
- Eat small meals often.
- Stay away from greasy, fried, or spicy foods.

See your healthcare provider if you can't keep anything down.

If you are constipated, it may help to eat more fresh fruits, vegetables, high-fiber breads, and cereals. Do not use laxatives unless your healthcare provider tells you to.

If you have diarrhea, it may help to:

- Eat yogurt, rice, dry toast, or bananas. (Choose yogurt that has active cultures.)
- Ask your healthcare provider about taking Pepto-Bismol or Maalox.

If you get heartburn, it may help to:

- Eat 5 or 6 small meals a day instead of 2 or 3 large meals.
- Eat less spicy or fatty food.
- Bake or broil your food instead of frying it.
- Stay away from orange juice or grapefruit juice. Instead, drink water, milk, apple juice, or cranberry juice.
- Not lie down for 1 to 2 hours after you eat.
- Ask your healthcare provider if you can use an antacid.

Are there things I should not eat, drink, or use when I am pregnant?

To keep healthy and have a healthy baby:

- Stay away from wine, beer, and liquor.
- Don't use tobacco or drugs.
- Check with your healthcare provider before you take any medicine.
- Use less caffeine. Caffeine is in soft drinks, chocolate, coffee, and some kinds of tea. Some doctors say you should not have any caffeine during the first 3 months of your pregnancy. They also say that you should have no more caffeine than is in one 12-oz cup of regular brewed coffee during the rest of your pregnancy.
- Don't eat or drink:
 - Any foods made with unpasteurized milk. (Read labels, especially on packages of soft cheese.)
 - Meat, fish, shellfish, or eggs that are raw or undercooked.
 - Shark, swordfish, king mackerel, or tilefish (also called snapper).
- Each week don't eat more than:
 - 6 ounces of canned white (albacore) tuna, tuna steak, or halibut
 - A total of 12 ounces of fish

The best choices of fish are shrimp, pollock, salmon, cod, catfish, or light canned tuna.

- Keep following this advice while you are breast-feeding your baby.

If you don't eat meat or you have medical problems, like diabetes, be sure to talk to your healthcare provider about your diet.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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