

Weight Control During Pregnancy

When you are pregnant, you need to get enough calories from your food to nourish your baby and stay in good health yourself. In this discussion of pregnancy and weight control you will learn how much weight you should gain and why it is important not to gain too much or too little.

How much weight should I gain?

Your healthcare provider will suggest a range of weight that you should gain, usually about 20 to 35 pounds if you were a normal weight before you became pregnant.

You will gain 20 pounds just by being pregnant as your breasts, uterus, and baby get bigger. The placenta, bag of waters (amniotic sac), and extra blood and body fluids are included in this 20-pound gain.

The following table gives recommended ranges of total weight gain if you are pregnant with 1 baby. It is based on your BMI (body mass index) before pregnancy. The BMI uses your height and weight to estimate how much fat is on your body and can be used to see if you are overweight. (You can use some Web sites to calculate your BMI, such as <http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi>).

Weight Classification	BMI	Recommended Weight Gain*
Underweight	under 18.5	28 to 40 lb (12 to 18 kg)
Normal weight	18.5 to 24.9	25 to 35 lb (11 to 15 kg)
Overweight	25 to 29.9	15 to 25 lb (6 to 11 kg)
Obese	30 or higher	11 to 20 lb (4 to 9 kg)

* Women less than 18 years old should try to gain weight at the higher end of these ranges.

If you are pregnant with twins, the recommended weight gain is 37 to 54 lb (16.8 to 24.5 kg) if you have a normal weight, 31 to 50 lb (14.1 to 22.7 kg) if you are overweight, and 25 to 42 lb (11.3 to 19.1 kg) if you are obese.

Overweight mothers may have larger babies and may be at higher risk for diabetes during pregnancy. It may also be difficult to follow the baby's growth and development with physical exams. Ultrasound exams of the baby may be needed to check the baby's health. However, if you are overweight, you should not try to lose weight during pregnancy. This can be harmful to the baby. You should still gain at least 11 to 15 pounds during pregnancy.

If you are underweight, you are more likely to have problems such as preeclampsia (blood pressure problems), premature delivery, and bleeding. Your healthcare provider can help you plan a diet to help you gain enough weight.

What if I gain too much weight?

Try to stay within the weight range your healthcare provider sets for you. If you gain too much weight, you may be overeating or eating the wrong types of foods. Your provider can review your diet and decide whether you are eating too much. If you are not overeating and are eating the right types of food, the extra weight is usually extra water. Extra water can be caused by too much salt in your diet. If you gain too much weight, you may have trouble losing the extra pounds after the baby is born.

If you gain 3 to 5 pounds in 5 to 7 days, you should call your healthcare provider. This is important because it may be a sign of preeclampsia (a condition that causes high blood pressure, extra water weight, and protein in the urine). Your provider will tell you how much salt and calories you should eat if you have this problem.

What if I don't gain enough weight?

If you do not gain enough weight (less than 2 pounds a month in the last 6 months), the baby may have problems at birth. It is important not to lose weight while you are pregnant. Ask your healthcare provider or dietitian to help you plan your diet.

Special situations

- If you are a teenage mother, you have special requirements because you are still growing yourself and need extra nutrients. Talk to your healthcare provider about a diet plan.
- If you need financial help buying nutritious foods, a government program called the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children can help you buy foods like milk, eggs, cheese, and bread.
- If you have cravings for things that are not food (such as starch, clay, or ice) and eat these things instead of food, you will not get good nutrition and it will be hard for you to gain weight. This is called pica. Talk to your healthcare provider if you have these cravings.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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Calculating Your Health Risk Using Your Body Mass Index

1. Find your body mass index (BMI) on the chart below. Your body mass index uses your height and weight to estimate how much fat is on your body. Find your height on the left. Then find your weight on the row at the top. Your BMI is the number on the chart at the intersection between your height and weight.

Weight	105	110	115	120	125	130	135	140	145	150	155	160	165	170	175	180	185	190	195	200	205	210	215
Height																							
5'0"	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42
5'1"	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	
5'2"	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39		
5'3"	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38		
5'4"	18	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37		
5'5"	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37		
5'6"	17	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36		
5'7"	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36		
5'8"	16	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35		
5'9"	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35		
5'10"	15	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34		
5'11"	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34		
6'0"	14	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33		
6'1"	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33		
6'2"	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33		
6'3"	13	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32		
6'4"	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32		

2. Measure your waist size.
3. Use your BMI and waist size to determine your health risk on the chart below.

BMI	Waist size	
	35 inches or less (women) 40 inches or less (men)	More than 35 inches (women) More than 40 inches (men)
<18	Underweight	
18.5 to 24.9	Healthy Weight	
25 to 29.9	Overweight	High risk
30 to 34.9	Obese	Very high risk
35 to 39.9	Obese	Very high risk
40 or more	Extremely Obese	Extremely high risk

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