

## Nutrition in Pregnancy

Proper nutrition is essential to a healthy pregnancy.  
Appropriate nutrition:

1. reduces risk of excess weight gain
2. ensures we are getting appropriate daily values of vitamins and minerals through our food sources (which are better absorbed than most oral vitamin supplements)
3. reduces risk of high blood pressure, gestational diabetes, and other health complications

### Do I need to be 'eating for two'?

No. A pregnant person needs approximately 300 kilocalories more per day than their non-pregnant counterparts which, speaking generally, is two extra snacks per day.

It is advisable to eat small frequent meals throughout the day instead of a few large meals with small snacks as this keeps blood sugar levels more stable throughout the day.

*What* you choose to eat and *how* you pair foods will keep you fuller for longer. Pairing a complex carbohydrate and a protein will keep your blood sugars more stable, your stomach fuller for longer, and you more satiated. Think cheese and multigrain crackers, hummus and vegetables/whole grain pita, a chicken Caesar salad, or a mild chickpea curry in light coconut milk.

## What Should I Focus On?

1. **Fresh vegetables** – broccoli, cauliflower, green/yellow beans, edamame, peas, spinach, zucchini, dark leafy greens, tomatoes, cucumber, avocado, sweet potatoes  
**Limit:** *potatoes, carrots, and corn* (high carbohydrate and high glycemic value)
2. **Lean cuts of meat and fish, and protein alternatives** – e.g. boneless skinless chicken breast, lean ground beef, salmon, tofu, beans/lentils/pulses
3. **Healthy fats** – e.g. olive/nut/seed oils, nuts, eggs, full-fat Greek/Icelandic yogurt  
**Avoid:** *vegetable or canola oils* (highly processed)
4. **Whole grains** – brown rice, bran, quinoa, freekeh, steel cut oatmeal, multigrain bread (keep you fuller for longer and don't spike your blood sugar levels as high as their 'white' counterparts)
5. **Water** – aim for 2-2.5L of water in a day. Can be still or sparkling. You can add a citrus wedge, cucumber, raspberries, or fresh mint to liven it up!

## What Should I Consume In Moderation?

1. Fruits – limit fresh fruit intake to 2-4 servings per day. Choose higher fibre fruits such as berries and apples. You can pair with a high protein yogurt and some bran buds for a crunchy treat!
2. Certain vegetables – potatoes, corn, carrots (high carb, high calorie, and limited nutritional value)
3. Nuts/nut butter – tasty and protein/fat/nutritional powerhouses, but remember, a serving size for nuts is about ¼ of a cup and nut butter a tablespoon.

## What Should I Avoid?

1. **Processed and refined foods** (e.g. fast food, white flour/rice/bread, prepackaged meals). These foods, while tasty, easy, and quick, do not keep you full for long, lack proper nutritional value, and often contain unhealthy amounts of sodium, sugar and fat, not to mention unnecessary food preservatives.
2. **Fried foods** – these are also usually heavily processed foods laden with unnecessary unhealthy oils, salt, and/or sugar
3. **Added sugar** – slushies, cookies, cake, candies, jams. White sugar is the biggest culprit in causing blood sugar spikes, which often causes ‘crashes’ and cravings. Sugar is said to be more addictive than any known drug – try going without it for a week and you’ll know! Try to use reduced amounts of sugar, raw honey or dates, or even sugar substitutes (stevia, sucralose) which are safe for use in pregnancy.
4. **Fruit juices** – while delicious, they are often laden with added sugar and little nutritional value (vitamins are often added in after processing). From a nutritional perspective, it is better to eat the actual fruit instead.
5. **Fat free versions of foods** – when fat is taken out of a food, you can expect it has been overly processed and/or contains extra salt/sugar to ensure it remains ‘appetizing’. Remember – we **need** fat in our diets, it keeps us feeling fuller for longer!

## Cooking & Preparation Tips

Plan ahead and make a meal plan! Prepare a grocery list and buy only what you will need for the week.

Save time by ordering groceries online and doing curbside pick up or even delivery of your groceries if resources allow.

Devote an hour or two a week to meal/snack prep. You can cut/prepare all your snack veggies & fruits for the week, portion nuts/snacks, and make a chicken or egg salad for easy lunch making options.

Use your Crock Pot or Pressure Cooker – this is a great way to make large enough meals (think chilis, soups, stews) to feed the family and have leftovers for 1-3+ days! You can even freeze your leftovers into individual portions to reheat for lunches or for when you don’t have time to cook!

If your financial resources allow and you find yourself short on time, you might consider a meal service – some companies offer meal kits with the exact ingredients needed and you cook the meals yourself according to given instructions. Others offer local delivery of fresh pre-made meals which you need only heat and serve.

Bake/broil/steam rather than boil in order to keep the nutrients in your cooked foods.

You can always ask your family physician for a dietician referral, see a nutritionist for dietary suggestions and guidance, or visit <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>