



Peninsula
Health

Healthy eating for pregnancy



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Daily food serves

Vegetables

5 serves daily for all ages

Examples of 1 serve:

- ½ cup cooked vegetables
- 1 cup salad or green leafy vegetables
- ½ medium potato
- ½ sweet corn

Grain foods

18 years or under: 8 serves daily.

19-50 years: 8½ serves daily

Examples of 1 serve

- 1 slice bread
- ½ bread roll or flat bread
- ⅔ cup cereal
- ½ cup cooked rice, pasta, or noodles

Fruit

2 serves for all ages

Examples of 1 serve:

- 1 medium fruit, such as apple, banana
- 2 smaller fruits, such as apricots, kiwi fruits
- 1 cup diced tinned fruit (no added sugar)
- 30g dried fruit

Meat, chicken, fish, legumes

3½ serves daily for all ages

Examples of 1 serve:

- 65g lean beef, lamb, pork
- 80g poultry (chicken or turkey)
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup (150g) legumes and lentils
- 30g nuts or seeds
- 170g tofu

Dairy

18 years or under: 3½ serves daily

19-50 years: 2½ serves daily

Examples of 1 serve:

- 250mL milk
- 200g yoghurt
- 40g cheese (2 slices)
- 250mL soy milk with calcium
- 200g custard

Weight gain

How much weight you gain during pregnancy depends on your pre-pregnancy weight. The average weight gain is 11.5kg to 16kg. Most of the weight gain happens in the 2nd and 3rd trimester, usually around 0.5kg per week. The table below shows your ideal weight gain.

Pre-pregnancy BMI (kg/m ²)	Total weight gain range (kg)
Underweight (less than 18.5)	12.5kg – 18kg
Healthy weight (18.5 – 24.9)	11.5kg – 16kg
Overweight (more than 26 – 29.9)	7.0kg – 11.5kg
Obese (more than or equal to 30)	5kg – 9kg

Risks of gaining too much weight

There are many health risks for you and your baby if you gain more than the recommended healthy weight during pregnancy. These risks include gestational diabetes, abnormal growth of your unborn baby, pre-term delivery, complications during labour and increased risk of caesarean delivery. However, weight loss during pregnancy is **not** recommended.

Energy needs

Your body needs more kilojoules (energy) during pregnancy for your growing baby. But the extra amount you need is not a lot – about the same as two large glasses of full cream milk or a sandwich.

Important nutrients

Calcium

Calcium is an important mineral during pregnancy. It helps to develop your baby's bones and teeth, helps blood clotting and helps in nerve and muscle function.



If you don't eat enough calcium-rich foods, your body will take calcium from your bones to give to your baby. This increases your risk of osteoporosis (weak and brittle bones) later in life.

Make sure you have enough dairy foods every day. If you choose not to eat dairy foods, you need to have other high calcium foods or take a calcium supplement. Check with your doctor or dietitian.

Best sources of calcium

- Milk (low fat milks often have more calcium)
- Cheese
- Yoghurt
- Custard
- Ice Cream
- Soy milk and soy yoghurt fortified with calcium (check labels on soy products for at least 120mg of calcium per 100mls)

Good sources of calcium

Fish with bones (such as sardines, tinned salmon)

Other sources of calcium

- Cereals, grains and muesli
- Seeds (such as tahini paste, sesame seeds)
- Nuts (such as almonds)
- Broccoli
- Tofu and soybeans

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is sometimes known as the 'sunshine vitamin' because we get most of it from the sun. Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium and is important for keeping and making your bones strong.

A deficiency in Vitamin D can cause rickets in your baby. Rickets is a bone deformity.

Best sources of Vitamin D

- Sunshine (during summer, 5-10 minutes for fair skin is needed for most days and 15-60 minutes for darker skin. During winter, up to 3 hours may be needed on most days)

Other sources of Vitamin D

- Fish, eggs, margarines and some milk have Vitamin D

Note: Our bodies don't absorb much Vitamin D from foods. When you have a low blood level of Vitamin D, you may need a Vitamin D supplement. Check with your doctor or dietitian.

Iodine

Unborn babies need Iodine to develop their brain and nervous system. Not enough Iodine can harm their growth and mental development. It is recommended to take an Iodine supplement or pregnancy multivitamin containing 150 micrograms of Iodine through pregnancy.

Note: If you are on thyroid medication, check with your doctor first before take an Iodine supplement.

Iron

Iron is important for healthy blood which carries oxygen around the body.

You need one and a half times more iron during pregnancy because you need more blood for you and to make your baby's blood.

Low iron levels can lead to iron deficiency. This can increase the risk of a low birthweight for your baby.

Best sources of iron

- Red meat, poultry and fish

Other sources of iron

- Egg yolk (cooked thoroughly)
- Legumes
- Dried apricots
- Tofu
- Green leafy vegetables (such as spinach, silver beet)
- Wholegrain breads and cereals

If you are a vegetarian or vegan, meeting your iron requirements is more difficult. Ask a dietitian for some practical suggestions.

If you cannot eat enough food with iron, you may need to take an iron supplement. Check with your doctor or pharmacist to find out which supplement is best for you.

Vitamin C can help

Our bodies do not absorb iron from plant foods very well. We can help absorb plant iron by eating food with Vitamin C at the same time. For example, orange juice helps absorb iron from breakfast cereal (such as Weeties®, Vita Brits®) and tomato helps absorb iron from legumes (such as baked beans).

Best sources of Vitamin C

- Citrus fruits and juices
- Green leafy vegetables
- Potato
- Tomato
- Capsicum
- Blackcurrants

Folate (Vitamin B9)

Folate is needed to grow new cells for you and your baby. It is found in most green, leafy vegetables.



Folate is easily destroyed in cooking, so try to eat fresh or lightly cooked vegetables.

Good sources of folate

- Green leafy vegetables
- Legumes and beans
- Wholegrain breads and cereals
- Fruits (such as oranges, bananas and strawberries)
- Nuts
- Fortified food (such as Special K®, and some fruit juices).

Folate supplements

A folate supplement is usually needed during pregnancy. This helps reduce the risk of your baby developing neural tube defects such as spina bifida.

Remember: Discuss a folate supplement with your doctor or dietitian when planning your next pregnancy.

The recommended dose is a 500 microgram (μg) supplement daily, one month before and during your first 12 weeks of pregnancy.

Vitamin A

Too much Vitamin A during pregnancy can be harmful to your baby. The type of vitamin A found in liver and in some vitamin supplements could be a problem.

- Only eat small amounts of liver (no more than 50 grams a week)
- If you take a multivitamin, make sure it is a pregnancy multivitamin.

The type of Vitamin A found in other foods like fruit and vegetables is safe during pregnancy.

Multivitamins

Multivitamins can be helpful if you find it difficult to meet the recommended serves of each food group.

If you take a multivitamin, make sure it is **pregnancy-specific**.

What else you need to consider

Caffeine

Caffeine is a stimulant naturally found in tea, coffee, cola drinks and chocolate. Caffeine can enter your baby's bloodstream and can affect your baby's blood flow and heart rate. It can also lead to miscarriage or cause low birth weight.

Try to limit caffeine intake during pregnancy.

Recommendation

Pregnant women should limit their caffeine intake to less than 200 milligrams (mg) daily.

Use the table below to see how much caffeine you are eating and drinking.

Food	Quantity	Caffeine (mg)
Espresso (commercial)	Standard	50-300
Brewed coffee	250ml cup	100-350
Instant coffee	250ml cup	75
Decaffeinated coffee	250ml	4-8
Tea	250ml cup	50
Hot chocolate	250ml cup	5-10
Cola	375ml can	40
Diet cola, caffeine free	375ml can	0
Chocolate	50g bar	25-50

Energy drinks such as Red Bull® can also have large amounts of caffeine or guarana (a plant-like substance that contains caffeine).

Energy drinks are not recommended during pregnancy.

Sweeteners

All artificial sweeteners (such as Equal®, Spenda®, Nutrasweet®) are considered safe during pregnancy. However, it is important to use them in small amounts.

Alcohol

Heavy drinking may be harmful to your baby during the early stages of pregnancy. It can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth or premature birth. Or your baby could be born with foetal alcohol syndrome (which harms your baby's growth and mental development).

The effects from low to moderate alcohol use are less clear.

Best advice

Do not drink any alcohol during pregnancy.

Fish and pregnancy

Fish is important for healthy eating. It is high in protein, omega 3s and iodine, which babies need for brain and nerve development.

But fish also contains mercury. High amounts of mercury can be harmful to the baby as it can cause developmental delay.

Best advice

Be careful about which fish you eat. That's because some fish contain high levels of mercury which can be harmful for the baby. Limit how much of these you eat.

- Shark (flake) and Billfish (Swordfish, Boradbill, Marlin).
Eat only 1 serve (100g) a fortnight and no other fish that fortnight.
- Orange Roughy (Deep Sea Perch) or Catfish.
Eat only 2 serve a week and no other fish that week.

Other fish can be eaten 2-3 times per week.

Best choices

Eat oily fish such as salmon, sardines, herring, mackerel and tuna.

Reducing the risks of infections that may harm your baby

Listeriosis (listeria)

Listeria is bacteria which can cause an infection called listeriosis. Pregnant women are at a higher risk of developing this infection which can be harmful to your baby. It can lead to miscarriage, premature birth or stillbirth. It is caused by eating foods contaminated by the bacteria.

Reduce your risk of infection

- Use good food hygiene. Wash your hands, use clean utensils and make sure food is kept at the right temperature.
- Eat only freshly cooked or freshly prepared food. Listeria bacteria are damaged by cooking to boiling point. When you buy pre-made foods or you reheat foods, make sure the food is steaming hot.
- Put leftovers in the fridge and use within 24 hours of cooking.
- Follow 'use by' and 'best before' dates on refrigerated foods.

High risk foods to avoid

- Soft and semi-soft cheese (such as brie, camembert, feta, ricotta)
- Cold or pre-cooked chicken
- Cold processed meats
- Raw or smoked seafood
- Pre-prepared or pre-packaged salads
- Paté
- Unpasteurised dairy products
- Soft-serve ice-cream

Toxoplasmosis

Toxoplasmosis is another infection that can harm unborn babies.

- Always cook meat well, and wash fruit and vegetables well before eating and cooking them.
- Make sure you wear gloves and wash your hands thoroughly after gardening or handling cat litter.

Common side effects of pregnancy

Morning sickness

Nausea and vomiting may be helped by:

- Eating small meals and snacks more often. An empty stomach or feeling hungry can make nausea worse
- Have plenty to drink. To stop dehydration sip cordial, juices, icy poles, jellies or lemonade if water won't stay down
- Avoid rich, spicy or fatty foods
- Stay away from smells and foods that start nausea
- Eat a dry biscuit before you get out of bed in the morning
- Research shows that ginger and Vitamin B6 can reduce mild nausea

Important: check with your pharmacist for recommended doses

If nausea and vomiting is severe and continuous, contact your doctor or hospital for advice.

Constipation

Constipation can sometimes be a problem during pregnancy.

Make sure you drink lots of fluids (at least 6 to 8 glasses a day) and eat foods high in fibre. Fibre is found in the indigestible parts of plants, so plant foods are a great source of fibre.

Best sources of fibre

- Wholegrain breads and cereals
- Porridge
- Natural bran and oat bran, rice bran
- Fresh fruit and dried fruit
- Vegetables
- Nuts and legumes (such as baked beans, lentils and chickpeas)

Laxatives

Always ask your doctor or pharmacist before taking laxatives, to check if they are safe during pregnancy.

Heartburn

As your baby grows it can put pressure on your stomach. This can feel like burning in your chest.

Hormones from pregnancy also cause heartburn.

Helping to reduce heartburn

- Eat small meals more often
- Cut down on high fat and spicy foods
- Avoid drinks high in caffeine and alcohol
- Try to drink fluids in between meals rather than at meal times
- Avoid lying down or bending over for two hours after eating
- Wear loose clothes
- Sleep with extra pillows

Sample menu

Breakfast

- Wholegrain cereal (muesli or wheat biscuits) with low fat milk
- Wholegrain toast with a thin scrape of margarine, butter or a spread of your choice
- Piece of fresh fruit or glass of juice

Lunch

- Wholegrain sandwich or roll with a lean meat, fish, chicken or cheese and salad filling
- Piece of fruit
- Glass of low fat milk or yoghurt

Dinner

- Lean meat, fish, chicken or bean dish
- Potato, rice or pasta
- Vegetables in a range of colours, or a side salad
- Fruit
- Low fat yoghurt or custard

Snacks

- Fresh or dried fruit, nuts, cheese and biscuits, or milk based drinks

More information on nutrition

For more information on nutrition and pregnancy, please contact the Dietetics Department at Frankston Hospital on **9784 2660**

Disclaimer: The information contained in the brochure is intended to support, not replace, discussion with your doctor or health care professionals.

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