

eating healthy during pregnancy

by Derek J. tenHoopen, MD

Eating right during pregnancy is one of the best things a woman can do for herself and her baby.

BEFORE PREGNANCY

The best time to begin eating a healthy diet is before a woman becomes pregnant. It is of enormous value to her and her baby to start out with the proper nutrients they will both need. If a woman is planning on becoming pregnant, she should make an appointment to see her physician.

A HEALTHY DIET

The first step towards eating healthy is to look at the foods in your daily diet. Having healthy snacks, for example, that you can eat during the day is a good way to get needed nutrients and extra calories. To help avoid nausea and heartburn, it is best to eat small meals and snacks throughout the day rather than three big meals a day.

A healthy diet also means avoiding things that may be harmful to the fetus. These include alcohol, recreational drugs, and cigarettes. Avoiding or limiting caffeine is also of great benefit.

DAILY FOOD CHOICES

Pregnant women need to eat an additional 100-300 calories per day. In addition to proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals, pregnant women need the following number of servings per day of:

- Grains: 6 ounces (bread, cereal, rice, pasta)
- Vegetables: 2 ½ cups (raw or cooked vegetables or leafy greens)
- Fruit: 1 ½ -2 cups (fruit or 100% fruit juice)
- Meat & Beans: 5-5 ½ ounces (meat, poultry or fish; dry beans, eggs, peanut butter)
- Milk: 3 cups (milk, yogurt, natural cheese)

Key nutrients needed per day are:

- Calcium (1,000 mg) (milk, cheese, yogurt, sardines)
- Iron (27 mg) (lean red meat, dried beans, iron-fortified cereals)
- Vitamin A (770 micrograms) (carrots, dark, leafy greens, sweet potatoes)
- Vitamin C (85 mg) (citrus fruit, broccoli, tomatoes, strawberries)



- Vitamin B6 (1.9 mg) (beef, liver, pork, ham; bananas, whole grain cereals)
- Vitamin B12 (2.6 micrograms) (liver, meat, fish, milk)
- Folate (600 micrograms) (green, leafy vegetables, liver, orange juice, nuts)

Pregnant women need extra iron and 400 micrograms of folic acid daily for at least one month before pregnancy and the first three months after conception. A woman who is, or is planning to become, pregnant should check with her doctor before taking any vitamins, herbs, or other supplements, since some may be harmful during pregnancy.

A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Whether pregnant or not, eating healthy is a very important lifestyle choice. Refer to the food pyramid developed by the US Department of Agriculture (www.mypyramid.gov) to help you choose what to eat.

ROCHESTER RESOURCE

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