

Diet - related recommendations to support a healthy pregnancy

Pre-pregnancy

During pregnancy

More information

Eating a healthy and varied diet

It's never too early! Trying for a baby is a great time to think about improving your diet.

For a healthy diet to support pregnancy include:

- Plenty of vegetables and fruit.
- Wholegrain foods.
- A variety of protein foods which may include:
 - **Plant-based proteins** – beans, lentils, chickpeas, nuts.
 - **Animal-based proteins** – fish, eggs, lean meats.
- Dairy foods or fortified dairy alternatives.
- Some healthy fats e.g. rapeseed or olive oils, nuts and seeds.

Vitamin D, folate, iodine, calcium and iron are important for baby's development and your health. A healthy diet can provide most of the nutrients you need.



If you are vegan, make sure you get enough of these nutrients through suitable plant-based options, fortified foods and/or supplements.



Supplements

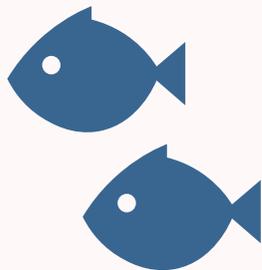
Folic acid (400µg/day): while trying for a baby (three months before) and during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. Folic acid reduces risk of birth defects known as neural tube defects.

Vitamin D (10µg/day): consider a supplement from October to March.

People at high risk of vitamin D deficiency need supplements year-round – check with your GP or midwife.

You may be eligible for free [Healthy Start vitamins](#).

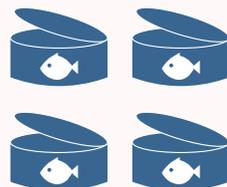
Fish is a nutrient-rich choice



Eat two portions of fish a week including one oily type (e.g. salmon, mackerel, sardines).

Oily fish contains omega-3 fatty acids, which are important for baby brain development.

Fish is a healthy food to include but there are limits on some types. This is because they can contain low levels of pollutants. Fish to limit:



- No more than two portions of oily fish a week.
- Limit tuna to four cans or two steaks per week.
- Avoid shark, swordfish and marlin.

To minimise risk of listeria (food poisoning) avoid:



- Cold smoked/cured fish e.g. smoked salmon.
- Raw fish.
- Shellfish unless thoroughly cooked until steaming hot.

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Maintain a healthy weight

Living with obesity and diabetes in pregnancy can increase risks for mum and baby.

Aim for a healthy body weight before pregnancy, with a body mass index (BMI) between 18.5 and 25 kg/m².

You can use a BMI calculator: [Calculate your BMI](#).

Don't start a weight loss diet in pregnancy.

Focus on eating a healthy diet and keeping active.

If you have concerns about your weight, seek advice from your midwife or GP.



Healthy weight change (not excessive or too little weight gain) may improve pregnancy and health outcomes.

Stay hydrated and limit caffeine intake



Adequate hydration supports overall health and wellbeing; drink six - eight glasses/day.

Water is the healthiest choice.

Good hydration is essential to support your and your baby's health.

Drink plenty of fluid, at least eight 200ml glasses a day.

High caffeine intake can increase the risk of miscarriage and low birth weight.

Limit caffeine consumption to less than 200mg per day.



A mug of instant coffee has around 100mg of caffeine and a mug of tea 75mg. Typically, an energy drink has around 80mg (per 250ml).

Chocolate, green tea, soft drinks, and some medicines also contain caffeine.

Avoid alcohol consumption



If you choose to drink alcohol, don't drink more than 14 units* spread across a week.

The safest approach is not to drink alcohol at all.

There is no known safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

Avoid alcohol throughout pregnancy to minimise risks to the baby.



Heavy alcohol intake during pregnancy can lead to conditions such as fetal alcohol spectrum syndrome.

The more you drink the greater the risk.

*The number of units is based on the size of the drink, as well as its alcohol strength but typically a single small shot of spirits (25ml) is 1 unit, a pint of beer, lager or cider is 2-3 units (regular-strong) and a large glass of wine (250ml) is 3 units.

This table has been developed based on the *Nutrition Bulletin Briefing Paper Diet in Pregnancy (2025)*.