

## Nutrition in Pregnancy

Your dietary patterns and lifestyle are important when trying for a baby and during pregnancy. Aim to eat a healthy and varied diet, including plenty of fruit and vegetables, wholegrain foods, good protein sources (such as beans, pulses, fish, eggs, lean meat), dairy or fortified dairy-alternatives and sources of healthy fats (such as nuts, rapeseed oil, olive oil). Some nutrients are particularly important in pregnancy, the British Nutrition Foundation tells you more!

**Note:** Excessive **vitamin A** can increase the risk of birth defects. If taking a multivitamin check the label to make sure it does not include vitamin A (in the form of retinol). Do not take cod liver oil supplements. \*EPA and DHA are long chain omega 3 fatty acids.

### Iron



**Importance:** Supports the development of the placenta and red blood cells for you and your baby.

**Food sources:** Pulses (e.g. kidney beans, lentils), nuts, seeds and red meat.

You can obtain the iron you need from your diet, but your healthcare provider may prescribe supplements if you have iron deficiency anaemia.

**Did you know?** High vitamin C foods (e.g. bell peppers, tomatoes, berries) can help with iron absorption from plant foods.

### Folic Acid/Folate



**Importance:** Reduces risk of birth defects known as neural tube defects in the early weeks of pregnancy.

**Food sources:** Green vegetables (e.g. broccoli, spinach), fortified breakfast cereals, chickpeas, berries, cheese, wholemeal bread. From 2026, white flour will be fortified with folic acid.

**Did you know?** You should take a daily supplement of **400µg**, while trying for a baby (3 months before) and during the first 3 months of pregnancy.

A higher dose supplement (5mg/d) may be recommended to those who are at greater risk of having a baby with neural tube defects (e.g. those with a family history those living with diabetes or sickle cell anaemia).

### Omega 3s



**Importance:** Omega 3s are fatty acids needed for the growth and development of baby's brain and eyes.

**Food sources:** Oily fish (sardines, salmon, trout, mackerel).

**Did you know?** You should eat up to 2 portions of oily fish a week. If you don't eat fish, try walnuts, chia seeds, flaxseeds or rapeseed oil for plant-based omega 3s.

You may want to consider taking a supplement (450mg EPA and DHA\*) from 20 weeks onwards.

One portion of fish = 140g (cooked weight). The size of your whole hand.

### Iodine



**Importance:** Helps support your baby's brain development.

**Food sources:** Fish and shellfish, eggs and dairy foods (milk, cheese and yogurt). Vegans may want to consider iodine-fortified foods (e.g. some dairy alternatives - check the label).

**Did you know?** A portion of haddock (140g) provides all of your daily iodine needs.

### Vitamin D



**Importance:** For bone, teeth and muscles.

**Food sources:** Oily fish, eggs and vitamin D fortified foods (e.g. some yogurts / breakfast cereals)

**Top Tip: Canned, fresh and frozen fish all count!**

**Did you know?** You should consider taking a daily **10µg** supplement in the winter months, or year-round if you have darker skin or keep your skin covered.