

NUTRITION

You may be wondering what types of food you should be eating during your pregnancy. **This handout includes some general recommendations for you.**

For more information, you can refer to our other handouts on:

- Prenatal Vitamins
- You Have Iron Deficiency (And You're Pregnant)
- Folate (Folic Acid) Supplements
- Nutrients & Vitamins
- Foodborne Illnesses

The **Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC)** recommends that pregnant people follow **Canada's Food Guide**.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM CANADA'S FOOD GUIDE



GRAINS

Try to eat a variety of whole grain foods every day, and **limit** refined grains.

Whole grains can include:

- whole grain pasta or bread
- quinoa
- brown or wild rice
- whole oats and/oatmeal



Try to choose items with **more** fibre, and **less** sugar, sodium, and saturated fat.

HEALTHY FATS

Try to **reduce saturated fats** where you can (e.g., in fatty meats, high fat dairy products, etc.)



Instead, try to eat **healthy fats** (e.g., nuts, seeds, avocado, vegetable oils, soy products, etc.).

FRUITS & VEGETABLES

Try to fill half of your plate with fruits & vegetables.



If you are able to, eating a **variety of fruits & vegetables** is helpful in getting a wide range of nutrients.

You should also try to eat:

- **dark green** vegetables daily
 - e.g., okra, Chinese broccoli, kale, mustard greens, bok choy, etc.
- **orange** vegetables a few times each week
 - e.g., carrots, bell peppers, sweet potato, etc.



You can eat **fresh, frozen, or canned** vegetables and fruit.

Fruit juices can be high in sugar – instead try **whole or cut fruits**, if you are able.

PROTEINS

Try to eat a variety of proteins on a daily basis.

Incorporate **plant-based** proteins into your diet, as these contain more fibre and less saturated fats.



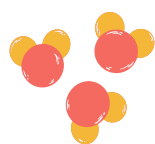
Foods that are **high in protein**:

- eggs
- meats and poultry
- fish and shellfish
- dairy products
- nuts and seeds
- beans, peas, and lentils
- soy products (e.g., tofu)

For vegetarians & vegans: make sure you eat foods/beverages that are fortified with vitamin B12.

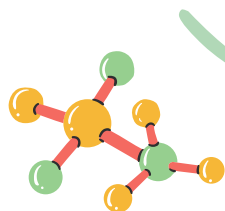
PLUS, try to make water your drink of choice! 💧

Please also read our handout "Foodborne Illnesses" so you can plan out your diet safely & carefully.



IMPORTANT NUTRIENTS DURING PREGNANCY

IRON	Iron is in meat, poultry, eggs, fish, beans, and some vegetables (e.g., spinach). You may need an iron supplement during your pregnancy. Our handout " You have iron deficiency - and you're pregnant " has more information.
FOLATE	During pregnancy, you should maintain a folate-rich diet and take a folate (folic acid) supplement . Foods rich in folate include dark green leafy vegetables, broccoli, peas, corn, lentils, and oranges. Speak to your doctor and see our handout " Folate (Folic Acid) Supplements " for more information.
OMEGA-3	Omega-3 is in fatty fish (try to eat fish that is low in mercury), eggs, nuts, and seeds.
CHOLINE	You can find choline in eggs, meat, poultry, nuts, legumes, and 'cruciferous' vegetables (e.g., broccoli, bok choy, cauliflower). Try to get at least 450mg per day .
IODINE	To get enough iodine, make sure you use iodized salt at home.



You should discuss your diet with your doctor to make sure that you are getting enough of each nutrient, or figure out if you need supplementation. This is especially important if you are **vegan or vegetarian**.

Do not take any supplements without consulting your doctor first.

HOW MUCH EXTRA FOOD SHOULD I EAT?

Food helps your body manage the extra demands as your fetus grows. The goal of eating during pregnancy is to balance getting enough nutrients to support the growth of your baby while maintaining a healthy weight. The amount of food you should eat while pregnant depends on your **pre-pregnancy weight** and which **trimester of pregnancy** you are in. **Consult your doctor** about any changes you may need to make to your diet.

Some people need to consume more calories in pregnancy and some do not. How much extra you consume is typically based on the **Body Mass Index (BMI)** you enter pregnancy with. While people often say you are "eating for two", you **shouldn't eat twice as much** as you used to. You should try eating **nutrients for two** (i.e., healthier!).

The following applies to people who had a BMI between 18.5 to 25 kg/m² (normal BMI) before pregnancy:

- Generally, in the first trimester, you may not need to eat any extra food.
- In the second trimester, you should eat around 340 calories more per day.
- In the third trimester, you should eat around 450 calories more per day.



References
O'Connor DL, Blake J, Bell R, et al. Canadian Consensus on Female Nutrition: Adolescence, Reproduction, Menopause, and Beyond. J Obstet Gynaecol Can. 2016;38(6):508-554.
Health Canada. Canada's Food Guide [Internet]. Government of Canada. 2023. Available from: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>
Korsmo HW, Jiang X, Caudill MA. Choline: Exploring the Growing Science on Its Benefits for Moms and Babies. Nutrients. 2019;11(8):1823.

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