

PRENATAL VITAMINS (PNV)

WHY ARE PRENATAL VITAMINS IMPORTANT?

Prenatal vitamins help your body get the nutrients and vitamins that can support your health and your baby's development during pregnancy. If your health care provider thinks you need more of a certain nutrient, they may recommend an additional supplement.

Please see our handouts "**Nutrition**", "**Folate (Folic Acid) Supplements**", "**You Have Iron Deficiency (And You're Pregnant)**", and "**Nutrients & Vitamins**" for more information!

WHEN SHOULD I START AND STOP TAKING MY PRENATAL VITAMIN?

Ideally, you will **start taking your prenatal vitamin 3 months prior to getting pregnant**. Do not worry if you get pregnant without having started the prenatal vitamin, but **start right away** as folic acid is especially important for the development of the neural tube (baby's brain and spinal cord), which develops early in pregnancy. You will continue your prenatal vitamin all the way through pregnancy and, if you're breastfeeding, throughout the length of time you breastfeed or pump for your baby.

WHAT NUTRIENTS SHOULD MY PRENATAL VITAMIN HAVE?



- During pregnancy, you need more **folic acid and iron**, which can help the development of the brain, spinal cord, and prevent anemia.
- Prenatal vitamins may also contain **calcium**, which help teeth and bone development, and **vitamin D**, which helps absorb calcium.
- Most prenatal vitamins also contain **Vitamins A, B, and C**, as well as **zinc** and **iodine**

WHICH PRENATAL VITAMINS SHOULD I TAKE?

Prenatal vitamins are available at most pharmacies. They may contain different nutrients and cost different amounts. Any prenatal vitamin is okay so long that it contains enough folic acid for you (typically 0.4mg for healthy, low-risk patients!).

Look for this seal on your prenatal vitamin!



Prenatal vitamins that have been **reviewed by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC)** to be safe and effective for pregnancy carry their "recognition" seal.



ARE THERE ANY SIDE EFFECTS OF TAKING PRENATAL VITAMINS?

You may experience constipation and bloating when taking prenatal vitamins, which is usually due to the iron they contain. To avoid these side effects, drink **plenty of water** and include **fibre** in your diet, which can be found in leafy green vegetables, fruits, and legumes.

References

Mayo Clinic. Prenatal vitamins: Why they matter, how to choose [Internet]. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. 2022. Available from: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/pregnancy-week-by-week/in-depth/prenatal-vitamins/art-20046945>

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada. Brand Recognition Program [Internet]. Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada. 2024. Available from: <https://sogc.org/en/en/content/about/Brand-Recognition/brand-recognition-program.aspx>

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