



Pregnancy and Nutrition: A Balancing Act



Nutrition Matters

Mama Beware

There's no magic formula for healthy nutrition in pregnancy. In fact, during pregnancy the basic principles of healthy eating remain the same — get plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy products and lean protein. However, a few nutrients during pregnancy deserve special attention.

Folic acid and B12— Prevent birth defects: These two B vitamins help prevent neural tube defects, abnormalities of the brain and spinal cord. Lack of folic acid and B12 in a pregnancy diet may increase the risk of preterm delivery.

Calcium — Strengthen bones: You and your baby need calcium for strong bones and teeth. Calcium helps your circulatory, muscular and nervous systems run normally. If there's not enough calcium in your pregnancy diet, the calcium your baby needs will be taken from your bones.

Protein — Promote growth: Protein is crucial for your baby's growth. A new study published in [BMJ](#) shows need for adequate protein beginning early in pregnancy and continuing through the 3rd trimester.

Iron — Prevent anemia: Your body uses iron to make hemoglobin, a protein in blood that carries oxygen to tissues. During pregnancy blood volume expands to accommodate changes in your body and help your baby make their entire blood supply. As a result, your need for iron nearly doubles. If your diet is low in iron, it may be low in zinc too!

Prenatal Vitamins- Even if you eat healthy every day, you may miss out on key nutrients. Taking a daily prenatal vitamin and mineral supplement, even before conception, can help fill any gaps.



**“Teeter-Totter
Drink your Water...Eat Good Foods
For a Healthy Son or Daughter”**



Certain Kinds of Seafood: Avoid seafood high in mercury (bigger, older fish are usually higher in mercury content). Beware of under-cooked seafood which may be contaminated with bacteria, parasites or viruses.

Hot dogs, lunch meats, & soft cheese: It's better to avoid highly processed meats, refrigerated pates and spreads, refrigerated smoked seafood and soft un-pasteurized cheeses. Not only high in salt and preservatives, these foods may contain Listeria— a bacteria that can cause miscarriage, fetal death, or severe illness or death of a newborn.

Alcohol: Nobody knows exactly how much alcohol can affect your baby. It is best to refrain from drinking alcohol during pregnancy.

Caffeine: Some studies suggest avoiding caffeine if but If you can't give up caffeine entirely limit intake.

Raw Eggs: If not cooked properly, you may be at risk of being exposed to salmonella.

For more information on nutrition concerning nutrition and pregnancy, see [MayoClinic.com/pregnancy and nutrition](#), [mypyramid.gov](#), [bmi.com](#)

By Christina Trottier and Rebecca Morley, MA