

Discovering what it really means to “eat for two” begins by busting a few myths.

Myth #1 – One For Me and One For Baby

Eating for two does not mean we are eating for two adults. The person you are growing, though he may have big nutritional needs, he doesn’t need the same number of calories as you do.

Myth #2 – Baby Wants Dessert

Even though any excuse for enjoying dessert may seem like a good one, you do need to consider the amount of sugar you eat while pregnant. Too much sugar can lead to gestational diabetes or gaining too much weight, too quickly.

Myth #3 – Eating More Will Help Me Feel Less Tired

The work of pregnancy is tiring, even with a balanced diet.

In your first trimester, you don’t need to add any extra calories to your diet. In your second trimester, you only need an extra 340 calories per day. If you began your pregnancy at a healthy weight and are only carrying one baby, by your third trimester, you’ll only need about 450 extra calories per day.¹

The Truth

Eating for two is about eating the right kinds of food in the right amounts to keep both you and baby healthy. Typically, if you start your pregnancy at a normal weight, you will only need to gain between 25 to 35 pounds your entire pregnancy.^{1,3} Also, your weight should be gained gradually throughout your pregnancy: Zero to five pounds in the first trimester and then half to one pound per week in the second and third trimester.¹ Overeating can cause extra weight gain, which can put you at risk for gestational diabetes, high blood pressure, and a bigger baby, which can then lead to more health problems later for your baby.^{1,3}

Foods to Limit or Avoid

There are foods you should limit or avoid altogether during pregnancy because they are unhealthy or unsafe to eat.

- Limit high calorie foods that have no nutritional value like candy, chips, and sugary drinks.
- Avoid and limit caffeine. Avoid it in the first trimester to reduce the likelihood of miscarriage, and then limit it in the second and third trimesters.⁶
- Avoid raw meats, raw shellfish, raw eggs, and raw sushi.
- Avoid unpasteurized dairy, smoked seafood, refrigerated pâté, and hot dogs. Deli meat should be heated thoroughly until steaming hot before you eat it.
- Some women develop a condition called pica which causes them to crave nonfood items during pregnancy, such as dirt and clay. Eating nonfood substances is potentially harmful to both you and baby, potentially interfering with nutrient absorption or introducing toxins or parasites. Talk to your provider if you are experiencing pica.⁷

Eating well and avoiding unsafe foods can help keep you and your baby healthy and thriving.

The following chart gives suggestions for the amounts and types of food you will need to eat during pregnancy. Your medical provider can confirm if these amounts are right for you.⁵



Tips for Pregnant Moms

Making healthy food choices along with regular physical activity will help fuel your baby's growth and keep you healthy during pregnancy.

Find Your Healthy Eating Style

Choose a variety of foods and beverages to build your own healthy eating style. Include foods from all food groups: fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy, and protein foods.

The amount and types of food you eat is an important part of a healthy eating style. Before you eat, think about what and how much food goes on your plate or in your cup, bowl, or glass.

Making Healthy Food Choices

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables. Choose fresh, frozen, canned, dried, and 100% juice. Include dark-green, red, and orange vegetables; beans and peas; and starchy vegetables.
- Make at least half your grains whole grains. Try oatmeal, popcorn, whole-grain bread, and brown rice.
- Move to low-fat or fat-free milk, yogurt, or cheese. Fortified soy beverages also count.
- Vary your protein routine. Choose seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, beans and peas, soy products, and unsalted nuts and seeds.
- Use the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients list to limit items higher in sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars. Drink water instead of sugary drinks. Choose vegetable oils instead of butter.
- Enriched grains, beans, peas, oranges, spinach, or other dark-green leafy vegetables can help you get the folate-rich food you need.

Visit Your Doctor Regularly

Doctors Recommend:

- Pregnant women and women who may be pregnant need to avoid alcohol and smoking. Ask for advice about caffeine, dietary supplements, and drug use.
- In addition to eating a healthy diet, take a prenatal vitamin and mineral supplement containing folic acid.
- Feed your baby only human milk (also known as breast milk) for the first 6 months.

How Much Weight Should I Gain?






- **The right weight gain** depends on your weight when you became pregnant. If your weight was in the healthy range, you should gain between 25 and 35 pounds. If you were overweight or underweight before becoming pregnant, the advice is different.
- **Gain weight gradually.** For most women, this means gaining a total of 1 to 4 pounds during the first 3 months. Gain 2 to 4 pounds each month from the 4th to 9th month.

Resources include:

1. "Pregnancy Weight Gain." American Pregnancy Association, 16 July 2021, americanpregnancy.org/pregnancy-health/pregnancy-weight-gain/, accessed 08/20/2024.
2. Halvorson, Melissa, MD – Ob/Gyn. Interview. 08/20/2024
3. Beil, Laura. "Mom's Weight during Pregnancy Shapes Baby's Health." Science News Mom's Weight during Pregnancy, 8 Aug. 2019, www.sciencenews.org/article/moms-weight-during-pregnancy-shapes-babys-health, accessed 08/20/2024
4. Beil, Laura. "Poor Diet in Pregnancy, Poor Heart Health for Infants." Science News Poor Diet in Pregnancy, Poor Heart Health for Infants, 8 Aug. 2019, www.sciencenews.org/article/poor-diet-pregnancy-poor-heart-health-infants, accessed 08/20/2024
5. https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/Tips_for_Pregnant_Women_English.pdf accessed 08/20/2024
6. "Caffeine during Pregnancy." American Pregnancy Association, 14 Sept. 2021, americanpregnancy.org/pregnancy-health/caffeine-intake-during-pregnancy/, accessed 08/20/2024
7. "Pica Cravings during Pregnancy." American Pregnancy Association, 16 July 2021, americanpregnancy.org/pregnancy-health/unusual-cravings-pica/, accessed 08/20/2024

Daily Food Checklist

The Checklist shows slightly more amounts of food during the 2nd and 3rd trimesters because you have changing nutritional needs. This is a general checklist. You may need more or less amounts of food.*

Food Group	1st Trimester	2nd and 3rd Trimesters	What counts as 1 cup or 1 ounce?
<i>Eat this amount from each group daily.*</i>			
Fruits 	2 cups	2 cups	1 cup fruit or 100% juice ½ cup dried fruit
Vegetables 	2½ cups	3 cups	1 cup raw or cooked vegetables or 100% juice 2 cups raw leafy vegetables
Grains 	6 ounces	8 ounces	1 slice bread 1 ounce ready-to-eat cereal ½ cup cooked pasta, rice, or cereal
Protein Foods 	5½ ounces	6½ ounces	1 ounce lean meat, poultry, or seafood ¼ cup cooked beans ½ ounce nuts or 1 Tbsp peanut butter 1 egg
Dairy 	3 cups	3 cups	1 cup milk 8 ounces yogurt 1½ ounces natural cheese 2 ounces processed cheese
<p><i>*If you are not gaining weight or gaining too slowly, you may need to eat a little more from each food group.</i></p> <p><i>If you are gaining weight too fast, you may need to cut back by decreasing the amount or change the types of food you are eating.</i></p>			
<p>Get a Daily Food Checklist for Moms designed just for you. Go to ChooseMyPlate.gov/Checklist.</p>			



Seafood

Seafood is part of a healthy diet. Omega-3 fats in seafood can have important health benefits for you and your developing baby. Salmon, sardines, and trout are some choices higher in omega-3 fats and lower in contaminants such as mercury.

- Eat at least 8 and up to 12 ounces of a variety of seafood each week from choices that are lower in mercury.
- Eat all types of tuna, but limit white (albacore) tuna to 6 ounces each week.
- Do not eat tilefish, shark, swordfish, and king mackerel since they are highest in mercury.



Being Physically Active

Unless your doctor advises you not to be physically active, include 2½ hours each week of physical activity such as brisk walking, dancing, gardening, or swimming. The activity can be done for at least 10 minutes at a time, and preferably spread throughout the week. Avoid activities with a high risk of falling or injury.

Learn about other nutrition assistance programs:
<http://www.benefits.gov/>

Based on the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/guidance>

Food and Nutrition Service
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