

Nutrition During Pregnancy

Eating well is one of the best things you can do during pregnancy. Good nutrition helps you handle the extra demands on your body as your pregnancy progresses. The goal is to balance getting enough nutrients to support the growth of your fetus and maintaining a healthy weight.

The popular saying is that pregnant women “eat for two,” but now we know that it’s dangerous to eat twice your usual amount of food during pregnancy. Instead of “eating for two,” think of it as eating twice as healthy.

If you are pregnant with one fetus, you need an extra 340 calories per day starting in the second trimester (and a bit more in the third trimester). That's roughly the calorie count of a glass of skim milk and half a sandwich. Women carrying twins should consume about 600 extra calories a day, and women carrying triplets should take in 900 extra calories a day

Vitamins and minerals play important roles in all of your body functions. Eating healthy foods and taking a prenatal vitamin every day should supply all the vitamins and minerals you need during pregnancy. Take only one serving of your prenatal supplement each day. Read the bottle to see how many pills make up one daily serving. If your obstetrician–gynecologist (ob-gyn) thinks you need an extra amount of a vitamin or mineral, your ob-gyn may recommend it as a separate supplement.

During pregnancy you need folic acid, iron, calcium, vitamin D, choline, omega-3 fatty acids, B vitamins, and vitamin C.

Folic acid, also known as folate, is a B vitamin that is important for pregnant women. Folic acid may help prevent major birth defects of the fetus’s brain and spine called neural tube defects (NTDs). When you are pregnant you need 600 micrograms of folic acid each day. Because it’s hard to get this much folic acid from food alone, you should take a daily prenatal vitamin with at least 400 micrograms starting at least 1 month before pregnancy and during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.

There are many tools that can help you plan healthy meals. One useful tool is the MyPlate food-planning guide from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The MyPlate website, www.myplate.gov, can help you learn how to make healthy food choices at every meal. The MyPlate website offers a MyPlate Plan, which shows how much to eat based on how many calories you need each day. The MyPlate Plan is personalized based on your height, pre-pregnancy weight, and physical activity level. The MyPlate Plan can help you learn about choosing foods from each food group to get the vitamins and minerals you need during pregnancy. The MyPlate Plan can also help you limit calories from added sugars and saturated fats.

Drink throughout the day, not just when you are thirsty. Aim for 8 to 12 cups of water a day during pregnancy.

For more information about nutrition and pregnancy, please call Meigs County Health Dept.’s WIC Program at 740-992-0392.

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