

Healthy Eating When You're Pregnant, Breastfeeding, or Postpartum

Whether you're pregnant or a new parent, eating well is important for you and your baby.

Eat Real Food Prioritize a diet built on whole, nutrient-dense foods. Choose a variety of healthy foods from these food groups:



Protein foods — such as eggs, poultry, seafood, and meat from animal sources, and plant-based sources, such as beans, peas, lentils, legumes, nuts, seeds, and soy.



Dairy — such as milk, yogurt, cheese, and, depending on your dietary needs, lactose-free or lactose-reduced products or fortified dairy alternatives.



Vegetables — such as broccoli, carrots, spinach, peppers, sweet potatoes, beets, okra, and jicama.



Fruits — such as berries, apples, oranges, bananas, grapes, and mangos.



Healthy fats — found in many whole foods, including seafood (especially salmon, sardines, and other fatty fish that provide omega-3 fats), nuts, seeds, avocados, eggs, dairy, meat, poultry, and olive oil.



Whole grains — such as brown rice, fiber-rich whole-grain bread, oatmeal, and whole-grain pasta.





How can I make vegetables and fruits more affordable?

- To get the best price on fresh produce, try buying vegetables and fruits when they're in season.
- You can also look for frozen, dried, or canned options, which are just as nutritious, can be more affordable, and last longer.
- Choose options with little or no added sugars or sodium (salt).

Is it safe to eat seafood?

Seafood is a great source of protein and healthy fats. Eating between 8 and 12 ounces of seafood a week not only helps you meet your protein needs but also supports your baby's brain development if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Keep these safety tips in mind if you eat seafood while pregnant or breastfeeding:

✓ Choose

Choose fish and shellfish that are low in mercury, like salmon, shrimp, and tilapia.

✗ Avoid

Avoid raw fish, like sushi, and always cook seafood to 145 degrees Fahrenheit (°F).

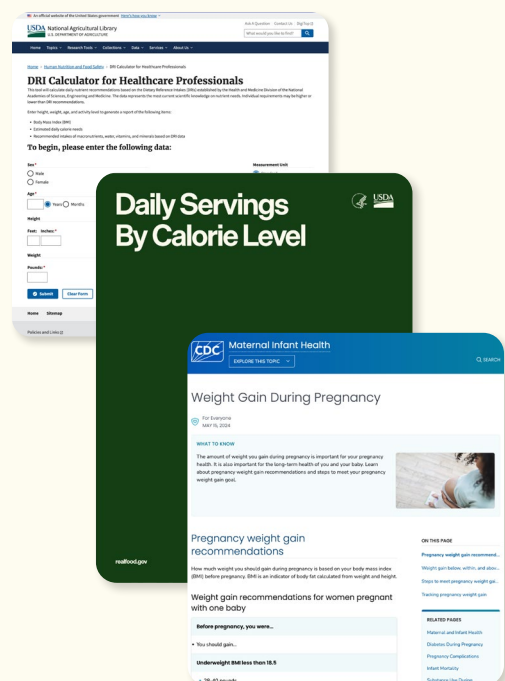


Learn more about eating fish safely at [fda.gov/fishadvice](https://www.fda.gov/fishadvice)

Eat the Right Amount for You

Eating a diet of whole, healthy foods and getting the right amount of calories are very important when you are pregnant or postpartum (after you give birth) and if you start breastfeeding.

- Your calorie needs generally increase during the second and third trimesters of pregnancy and while breastfeeding. Eat more whole, healthy foods to get the extra calories and nutrients needed to support your health and your baby's growth. After birth, if you're not breastfeeding, your calorie needs may be similar to before pregnancy.
- Don't put pressure on yourself to lose weight quickly after you give birth. Returning to your pre-pregnancy weight can take time. Aiming for gradual, steady weight loss, about 1 to 2 pounds per week, is usually a healthy goal.
- Talk to your doctor about your calorie needs and weight goals before, during, and after your pregnancy.



You can also use these resources to learn more:

- Use the **Dietary Reference Intake Calculator (DRI)** to estimate how many calories and nutrients you need each day: nsl.usda.gov/human-nutrition-and-food-safety/dri-calculator
- Visit the **Daily Servings Guide** for serving size suggestions for each food group based on your daily calorie needs: cdn.realfood.gov/DailyServingSizes_508.pdf
- Read more about healthy weight gain during pregnancy: cdc.gov/maternal-infant-health/pregnancy-weight/index

Get the Nutrients You Need

Eat a wide variety of whole, healthy foods to get the nutrients you and your baby need. It's important to pay attention to different nutrients at different stages — such as while you're pregnant, after you give birth, and if you start breastfeeding.

Prioritize these nutrients during **pregnancy**:

Iron helps your baby grow and develop. Many protein foods are good sources of iron, including beef, turkey, crab, shrimp, beans, peas, and lentils. You can also get iron from dark green vegetables, such as spinach and Swiss chard, and fortified whole-grain breakfast cereals. Pair your iron-containing foods with foods high in vitamin C, such as oranges, tomatoes, or bell peppers, to increase absorption of iron.



Calcium helps build your baby's bones and teeth. It can also lower your risk of a dangerous condition during pregnancy called preeclampsia. Preeclampsia can cause very high blood pressure and damage to your kidneys and other organs. Dairy products and fortified dairy alternatives, canned sardines and salmon, and leafy greens, such as kale and bok choy, are all good sources of calcium.

Folate prevents serious problems with your baby's brain and spine. Beans, peas, and lentils provide folate and protein. You can also get folate from dark green vegetables, such as spinach and broccoli.



Iodine is important for your baby's brain development. Many types of seafood, such as cod, tuna, and shrimp, are good sources of iodine. You can also get iodine from eggs, seaweed, and dairy products, including milk, yogurt, and cheese. If you add salt to your food, make sure it's iodized salt (salt with added iodine).

Choline helps your baby's brain and spine develop. Protein foods, such as eggs (with yolks), red meat, poultry, seafood, beans, peas, and lentils, are good sources of choline.





Omega-3 fats support your baby's brain and eye development. Seafood, such as salmon, sardines, and trout, is rich in omega-3 fats.

Vitamin B12 supports brain development and helps your baby make healthy red blood cells. Meat, poultry, and eggs are excellent sources of vitamin B12. You can also get vitamin B12 from dairy products, such as milk, yogurt, and cheese, as well as lactose-free or lactose-reduced products or fortified dairy alternatives.



After you give birth, continue to eat a variety of healthy, nutritious foods, especially if you are breastfeeding.



Many of the same nutrients that you prioritized during pregnancy can help as you heal and recover after delivering your baby. Continue to prioritize iron, calcium, folate, iodine, choline, omega-3 fats, and vitamin B12.

Breastfeeding increases energy and nutrient needs to support milk production and maternal health. If you breastfeed, prioritize vitamin B12-rich protein sources such as meats, poultry, eggs, and dairy; omega-3-rich seafood; and folate-rich legumes.

Be sure to also get plenty of vitamin A while breastfeeding.



+ Vitamin A helps your baby develop healthy vision and a strong immune system to protect against diseases. Foods such as eggs (with yolks) and certain vegetables and fruits are high in vitamin A. These include spinach, broccoli, carrots, sweet potatoes, red peppers, berries, bananas, and apples.

How can I practice food safety during pregnancy?

When you're pregnant, you and your baby are at higher risk of getting sick from germs that may be in certain foods. Follow these food safety tips to keep you and your baby healthy:

- Make sure milk, juice, and cheese say “pasteurized” on the label — never eat or drink unpasteurized (raw) juice, milk, and cheese. Pasteurized foods and drinks have been heated to kill off dangerous germs.
- If you eat soft cheese, such as brie or feta, make sure the label says it's made with pasteurized milk.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables before eating or cooking. Don't eat raw sprouts, which can have germs that are hard to wash off.
- If you eat deli meat or hot dogs, heat them to steaming hot (165 °F).
- Cook seafood, meat, poultry, and eggs to safe temperatures. You can find safe cooking temperatures at [foodsafety.gov/people-at-risk/pregnant-women](https://www.foodsafety.gov/people-at-risk/pregnant-women).



What can I do if I follow a vegetarian or vegan diet?

Animal products, including meat, dairy, eggs, and seafood, are good sources of many of the nutrients that are most important during pregnancy and breastfeeding. If you follow a vegetarian or vegan diet and eat limited or no animal products, prioritize plant-based options that provide key nutrients, such as iron, vitamin B12, choline, zinc, iodine, and omega-3 fats.

Talk with your doctor about your diet and whether you and your baby could benefit from a dietary supplement.

Avoid Highly Processed Foods, Added Sugars, and Refined Carbohydrates

You should avoid highly processed foods, added sugars, and refined carbohydrates, especially while pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum. This means:

✓ Choose

Choose whole vegetables and fruits, which are naturally low in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium.



– Limit

Limit highly processed, refined carbohydrates (processing removes fiber and nutrients), such as white bread, ready-to-eat or packaged breakfast options, flour tortillas, and crackers.



✗ Avoid

Avoid highly processed packaged, prepared, ready-to-eat foods that are high in added sugars (for example, from table sugar, syrups, and honey) and sodium. These foods include snacks, desserts, and candy.

Avoid sugar-sweetened beverages, such as soda, fruit drinks, sugary coffee and tea, and energy drinks. Choose sparkling water, still water, or unsweetened beverages instead, and add fruits or herbs for extra flavor.



How can I track added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium in my diet?

Many highly processed foods are high in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium. The Nutrition Facts label can help you choose foods low in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium. A percent (%) Daily Value of 5% or less of a nutrient is generally considered low. More often, choose foods that are lower in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium.

Here are some more tips:

✓ Choose

Choose foods that are lower in added sugars.

For example:

- Whole-grain cereal (such as oatmeal) with no more than 2.5 grams of added sugars per serving
- A dairy snack (such as yogurt) with no more than 2.5 grams of added sugars per serving

– Limit

Limit added sugars to 10 grams or less at each meal.

Keep in mind that no amount of added sugars is recommended as part of a healthy diet.

Limit saturated fat to 10% or less of your daily calories.

For example, if you're eating 2,000 calories a day, aim for less than about 20 grams (200 calories) of saturated fat.

Limit sodium to less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) per day.

Nutrition Facts

8 servings per container

Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)

Amount per serving

Calories 230

% Daily Value

Total Fat 8g 10%

Saturated Fat 1g 5%

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg 0%

Sodium 160mg 7%

Total Carbohydrate 37g 13%

Dietary Fiber 4g 14%

Total Sugars 12g

Includes 10g Added Sugars 20%

Protein 3g

Vitamin D 2mcg 10%

Calcium 260mg 20%

Iron 8mg 45%

Potassium 235mg 6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.



Caring for Yourself After Giving Birth

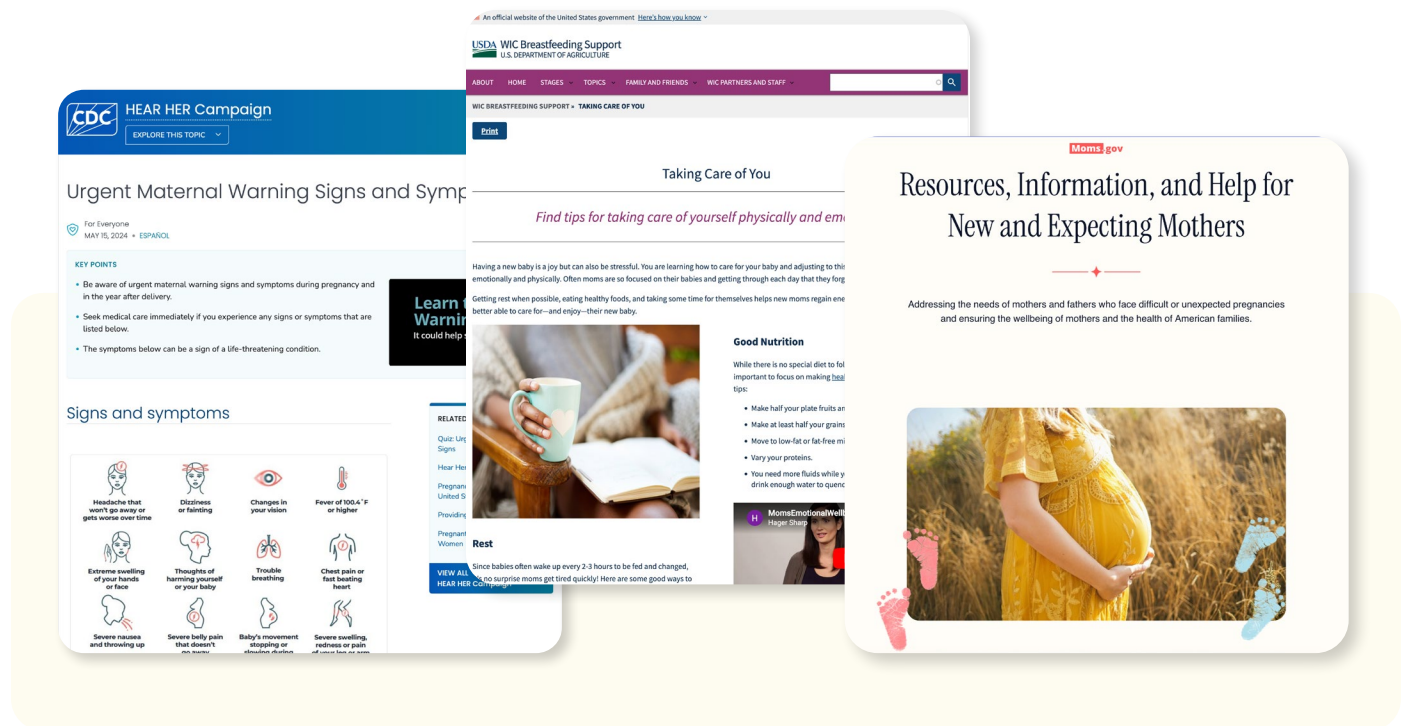
A healthy, nutritious diet is just as important for you as it is for your baby.

Proper nutrition helps you heal and recover after giving birth and gives you the energy to take on your new role. A healthy diet can also help you manage conditions that may have developed during or after your pregnancy, such as high blood pressure or diabetes.

Talk to your doctor about how your diet can support your postpartum recovery. You can also ask friends or family to help with meals so you can focus on rest and recovery.

These resources can help:

- Learn the warning signs for problems during and after pregnancy and share them with friends and family: cdc.gov/hearher/maternal-warning-signs/index.html
- Check out these tips for taking care of yourself: wicbreastfeeding.fns.usda.gov/taking-care-you
- Find resources, information, and help for new and expecting mothers: moms.gov



Keep These Tips in Mind

✓ Choose: Vitamins and Supplements

If you're pregnant or trying to get pregnant, take a daily prenatal vitamin and mineral supplement. It not only helps your baby grow and thrive but also helps you get the nutrients you need to support a healthy pregnancy, so you can stay healthy.

The type of prenatal supplement you choose matters. Not all prenatal supplements provide the same nutrients. Talk to your doctor about which prenatal supplement might be right for you — and if you might benefit from any other vitamins or supplements during pregnancy or while breastfeeding.

— Limit: Caffeine

Talk to your doctor about having caffeine while pregnant or breastfeeding. Keep in mind that many types of tea, soda, energy drinks, and other foods and drinks have caffeine, too. But they don't all have the same amount.

✗ Avoid: Alcohol

If you're pregnant or trying to get pregnant, don't drink alcohol at all — it's not safe for your baby.

While breastfeeding, it's still safer to avoid alcohol. If you're thinking about drinking while breastfeeding, talk with your doctor first. Learn more about alcohol use during breastfeeding at cdc.gov/breastfeeding-special-circumstances/hcp/vaccine-medication-drugs/alcohol.html.

Learn More About Healthy Eating

Visit RealFood.gov to learn about healthy eating and about the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. For more resources, please visit odphp.health.gov/HealthyEating.

