

Weight Gain in Pregnancy

Information for pregnant women

Every woman is different and pregnancy can challenge the way you feel about yourself and about how you look. During pregnancy, it is normal for you to gain weight as your baby grows and your body adapts. Our body shapes vary and pregnancy affects us in different ways. The most commonsense approach to weight gain in pregnancy is to eat healthy foods, don't deny yourself occasional treats, exercise within your own limits and celebrate your body's ability to produce life.

Eating well and exercising will help you to feel good about yourself.

How much weight should I gain in pregnancy?

Weight gain during pregnancy varies from woman to woman. Recommended weight gain will be dependent on your weight and your body mass index (BMI) prior to pregnancy. This will be measured and calculated at your first antenatal visit.

BMI calculates your weight relative to your height. If you are underweight you can afford to gain more than the average amount, or if you are overweight your weight gain may need to be less than average.

The table below is a general guide to the amount of weight you are recommended to gain as pregnancy progresses dependant on your BMI prior to pregnancy.

Gestation	BMI at onset of pregnancy			
	Under 18.5 Underweight	18.5-25 Healthy weight	25-30 Overweight	Above 30 Obese
Before 12 weeks pregnant	1 - 3 kg	1 - 3 kg	0 -1 kg	0 – 1kg
12-24 weeks pregnant	5 – 7 kg	5 – 6 kg	3 – 5 kg	2 – 4 kg
After 24 weeks pregnant	6 – 8 kg	5 – 6 kg	4 – 5 kg	3 – 4 kg
Total weight gain	12 – 18 kg	11 – 16 kg	7 – 11 kg	5 – 9 kg

What are the risks if I am below my recommended healthy weight in pregnancy?

Being underweight can increase your risk of having a baby too early (premature) or a baby with low birth weight which may require admission to special care nursery.

What are the risks if I am above my recommended healthy weight in pregnancy?

Being overweight or gaining too much weight in pregnancy can increase your risk of developing

- high blood pressure and/or pre-eclampsia
- obstructive sleep apnoea
- diabetes in pregnancy

can increase your risk of needing an induction of labour and/or a caesarean birth

can increase your baby's risk of high or low birth weight and/or unexplained stillbirth

Being overweight or gaining too much weight in pregnancy can make it difficult

- to monitor your baby's growth and wellbeing with ultra-sound scanning while you are pregnant
- to monitor your baby's heart rate when you are in labour

How can I manage my weight during pregnancy?

Eating a healthy, well balanced diet is a choice that can improve the health of both yourself and your growing family well into the future. It is very important for your health and your baby's health that you take a commonsense approach to diet and exercise during your pregnancy. Pregnancy is not a time for strict dieting nor do you need to 'eat for two'.

What is a healthy diet?

A healthy diet consists of the following:

- **Whole grain foods** - bread, rice and pasta -choose wholegrain where possible
- **Fruit and vegetables** - at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables each day
- **Protein** foods like red meat, pork, fish, chicken, tofu, eggs, beans, or nuts
- **Fibre** -foods high in fibre such as oats, beans, peas, lentils, grains, seeds, fruit and vegetables
- **Low-fat foods** - eat as little as possible of fried, battered or crumbed food, chips, cakes, pastries greasy take-away and rich desserts. Choose low fat dairy products such as low fat milk, low fat yoghurt and reduced fat cheese. Use oil, butter and margarine sparingly
- **Low sugar** intake – eat / drink as little as possible of sugar, soft drinks, cordials, cakes, sweet biscuits, chocolates and lollies
- **Breakfast every day**

During pregnancy, try to eat equal servings of protein, whole grains, and fruit / vegetables at each meal. You should aim to eat 2-3 serves of dairy products or fish with bones daily to increase your calcium intake. Your body needs calcium during pregnancy to help your baby build strong healthy bones and teeth, help with blood clotting and to keep nerves and muscles working well.

Should I exercise in pregnancy?

- Regular exercise is important as long as there are no problems with your pregnancy
- Swimming, brisk walking, cycling and strength conditioning exercise will maintain your fitness and vitality and make your pregnancy more enjoyable
- The aim of exercise in pregnancy is to stay fit, rather than to reach peak fitness
- If you have not exercised routinely before pregnancy, you should begin with no more than 15 minutes of continuous exercise, three times per week, increasing gradually to daily 30-minute sessions.

Still not sure?

If you are unsure what a 'healthy diet' for your family is, you can seek assistance from any of the following:

- Midwife / Doctor providing your antenatal care
- Your family doctor/ GP
- Maternal and Child Health Nurse
- Dietician
- Community Health Clinic

If you are booked to have your baby at an Eastern Health hospital and are still not sure

- if you are gaining too much or too little weight in pregnancy
- if your exercise is right for your level of fitness

We can put you in contact with our dieticians and physiotherapists. Please discuss your needs with your midwife or doctor

Queen Victoria Women's Centre – InfoHub www.qvwc.org.au/info-hub.html This website has a dedicated section on Positive Body Image with lots of good information and links to resources.

HEALTH Insite www.healthinsite.gov.au/topics/Diet_and_Pregnancy/

This website has easy to read information on topics such as Eating well in pregnancy

Better Health Channel <http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcsite.nsf/pages/bmi>

Victorian government department of health website