

# Healthy Eating & Active Living

● FOR PREGNANCY ●

EVERY PREGNANCY IS DIFFERENT  
EAT WELL. BE ACTIVE.



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Alberta



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# Thinking About Getting Pregnant?

## Here's your healthy lifestyle checklist

You're thinking about getting pregnant, but what exactly do you need to do to prepare yourself? Here is a quick list:

- ☐ I have talked to my health care provider about getting pregnant.
- ☐ I am taking a multivitamin containing 0.4 mg of folic acid every day.
- ☐ I am not smoking, drinking alcohol or using any drugs that have not been approved by my health care professional.
- ☐ I am at a healthy body weight or have discussed body weight concerns with my health care professional.
- ☐ I am not on a fad diet or very low calorie diet to lose weight quickly.
- ☐ I am eating a variety of foods from all four food groups: Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives, and Meat and Alternatives.
- ☐ I eat at least three meals per day and do not skip meals.
- ☐ I drink plenty of fluids each day: water, juice, milk and eat foods high in fluid such as soup, vegetables and fruit.
- ☐ I have spoken to my health care professional about how much physical activity is safe during pregnancy.
- ☐ I know that incorporating regular physical activity is part of a healthy lifestyle during pregnancy.
- ☐ I know how much physical activity is safe during each trimester of pregnancy.
- ☐ I am aware of which foods, beverages and medications I should avoid during pregnancy.



# Important Vitamins and Minerals

## Start a multivitamin containing folic acid before you get pregnant

Healthy eating and taking a multivitamin supplement with folic acid helps you prepare for a healthy pregnancy. This will help reduce your risk of having a baby with a neural tube defect.

Since many pregnancies are not planned, all women who could become pregnant should take a daily multivitamin that has 0.4 mg folic acid. Start taking your supplement at least 3 months before you get pregnant.

## Continue a multivitamin with folic acid when you are pregnant

Healthy eating and taking a daily multivitamin when you are pregnant helps you and your baby to be healthy. Choose a multivitamin that has 0.4 mg folic acid and 16 to 20 mg iron. Take your supplement throughout your pregnancy.

## Other nutrients

Make sure your supplement has vitamin B-12 and vitamin D.

Too much vitamin A can cause birth defects in your baby. Do not take more than 10,000 IU (International Units) of vitamin A daily from your food and supplements.

## Remember

Do not take more than 1 daily dose of a multivitamin.

Supplements do not take the place of food and healthy eating.

If you are vegan or if you avoid certain foods, you may be missing important nutrients. Ask your health care professional.

## Folic Acid (folate)

Each day, choose foods high in folic acid and take a multivitamin containing folic acid to help prevent neural tube defects in your baby. Some women may need higher levels of folic acid. Talk to your health care professional about your folic acid needs before you get pregnant if:

- You have had a pregnancy affected by a neural tube defect.
- You have a close relative with a neural tube defect.
- You have diabetes, obesity or epilepsy.
- You take medication.

Do not take more than 1 mg folic acid per day before talking to your health care professional.

**Foods high in folic acid:** Whole grain breads, leafy green vegetables, legumes, citrus fruits and juices. Most cereals in Canada are fortified with folic acid.

## Omega-3

Omega-3 fatty acids are important during pregnancy. Omega-3 fatty acids help your baby's eyes and brain. Fish has omega-3 fatty acids and other important nutrients for a healthy pregnancy.

Eat at least 2 food guide servings of fish each week.


Fish high in omega-3 fatty acids: salmon, trout, mackerel, halibut, Pollock (Boston bluefish), char, sole, canned light tuna, cod, herring and sardines. Other sources include vegetable oil, nuts and seeds and omega-3 enriched eggs.



Salmon

Egg





Peanut butter

## Iron

Your body makes an extra 2 kg (4 lbs) of blood during pregnancy! In your third trimester of pregnancy, your baby is building iron stores for the first six months of his or her life. You need more iron to make the extra blood and to help your baby store enough iron.

Choose foods high in iron and take a multivitamin containing folic acid and iron. Your body absorbs the iron from meat, poultry and fish better than iron in other foods. To increase iron absorption, eat a food with vitamin C at the same time as a food with iron. For example, have vegetables with meat or have an orange with a bowl of cereal and milk.

Tea and coffee can interfere with iron absorption. Limit tea or coffee and have it between meals rather than at meals.

Some women may need more supplemental iron than others. Talk to your health care professional to find out how much is right for you.

### Best sources of iron:

- beef, pork, chicken, lamb, fish, sardines, shrimp, oysters, mussels

### Good sources of iron:

- legumes (lentils, beans, chickpeas), tofu, whole grain and enriched cereals

## Anemia (iron deficiency)

Your iron needs are very high during pregnancy. Not having enough iron during your pregnancy (called “anemia”) has been linked to decreased weight gain, early delivery and low-birth weight babies. A common sign of anemia is fatigue. However, since most women feel fatigued during their pregnancy your blood tests are an important way your health care provider can make sure you are getting enough iron.

### You are more at risk of iron deficiency (anemia) if:

- You have a diet low in iron.
- You don't take your multivitamin containing folic acid and iron daily. Only take an extra iron supplement if prescribed by your health care professional.
- You have serious morning sickness or are vomiting regularly.
- You have had two or more pregnancies close together.
- You are carrying more than one baby.
- You had heavy periods before you became pregnant.

### How is anemia treated?

- Follow the nutrition recommendations for iron described on this page.
- Take your multivitamin containing folic acid daily and only take an extra iron supplement if prescribed by your health care professional.
- Since iron supplements can cause constipation, be sure to get enough fibre and fluids daily. See the fibre and fluids information found on page 13 of this handout.



Lentils



Tofu



Beef



## Calcium

Calcium helps keep your bones strong. During pregnancy, calcium helps your baby build strong bones and teeth. It also helps your muscles and nerves to work properly and helps your blood to clot.

**Foods high in calcium:** milk, yogurt, calcium-fortified beverages such as soy, rice or orange juice.

**Other food sources of Calcium:** cheese, canned salmon or sardines with bones, tofu made with calcium.

Drink at least 2 cups of milk or fortified soy beverage each day.



Fortified Soy Beverage



Cheese



Broccoli



Strawberries

## Vitamin D

Many Canadian women are not getting enough vitamin D. Are you getting enough?

Vitamin D is important in pregnancy. It helps keep your bones strong and builds strong bones in your baby. It also helps your baby build vitamin D stores.

Follow Canada's Food Guide, by drinking at least 2 cups of milk or fortified soy beverage daily and eating at least 2 servings of fish per week. Take a multivitamin containing folic acid and vitamin D (minimum 400 IU) daily. Check your multivitamin to see how much vitamin D you are getting from it.

If you have dark skin, cover most of your skin with clothing or sunscreen, don't go outside very often or don't eat very many vitamin D rich foods you may need to take extra vitamin D. Talk to your health care provider about how much vitamin D is right for you. Do not take more than 4000 IU of vitamin D per day before talking to your health care provider.

**Foods high in vitamin D:** milk, fortified soy beverage, fish such as salmon, trout, herring, Atlantic mackerel, sardines, and vitamin D-fortified orange juice.

**Note:** Not all milk products are high in vitamin D. In Canada, milk and margarine and some yogurts have added vitamin D.

## Food sources of vitamin C

- tomatoes, tomato sauce, broccoli, cabbage, sweet peppers, potatoes
- oranges and other citrus fruits, cantaloupe, kiwis, mangos, strawberries

### Difficulty digesting dairy foods?

If you have a lactose intolerance, lactose reduced milk or fortified soy beverages are available in most grocery stores. Liquid drops that you add to your regular milk or tablets that you take before eating a food or beverage that contains lactose are also available.





# Healthy Weight Gain

## Weight gain

Weight gain is an important part of pregnancy. Eating well and gaining the right amount of weight during pregnancy is not only good for you, but also good for your baby.

The recommended amount of weight gain for a healthy baby depends on your BMI before pregnancy. Knowing the weight gain range that is right for you will help you to gain enough weight without gaining too much weight. Find out your pre-pregnancy body mass index (BMI) by either:

- using the chart on the following page
- using an on-line calculator such as [healthcanada.gc.ca/pregnancy-calculator](http://healthcanada.gc.ca/pregnancy-calculator)
- using the formula of  $BMI = \text{weight(kg)} / \text{height(m)}^2$
- talking to your health care professional

Eating well and staying active can help you to gain the right amount.



## Too little?

Women who do not gain enough weight tend to have babies that:

- are born early
- weigh less than average
- are small for their age at birth

These babies have more risk of disease in the first few weeks of life, physical and mental disabilities, and ongoing health problems later in life.

## Too much?

Women who gain too much weight tend to have:

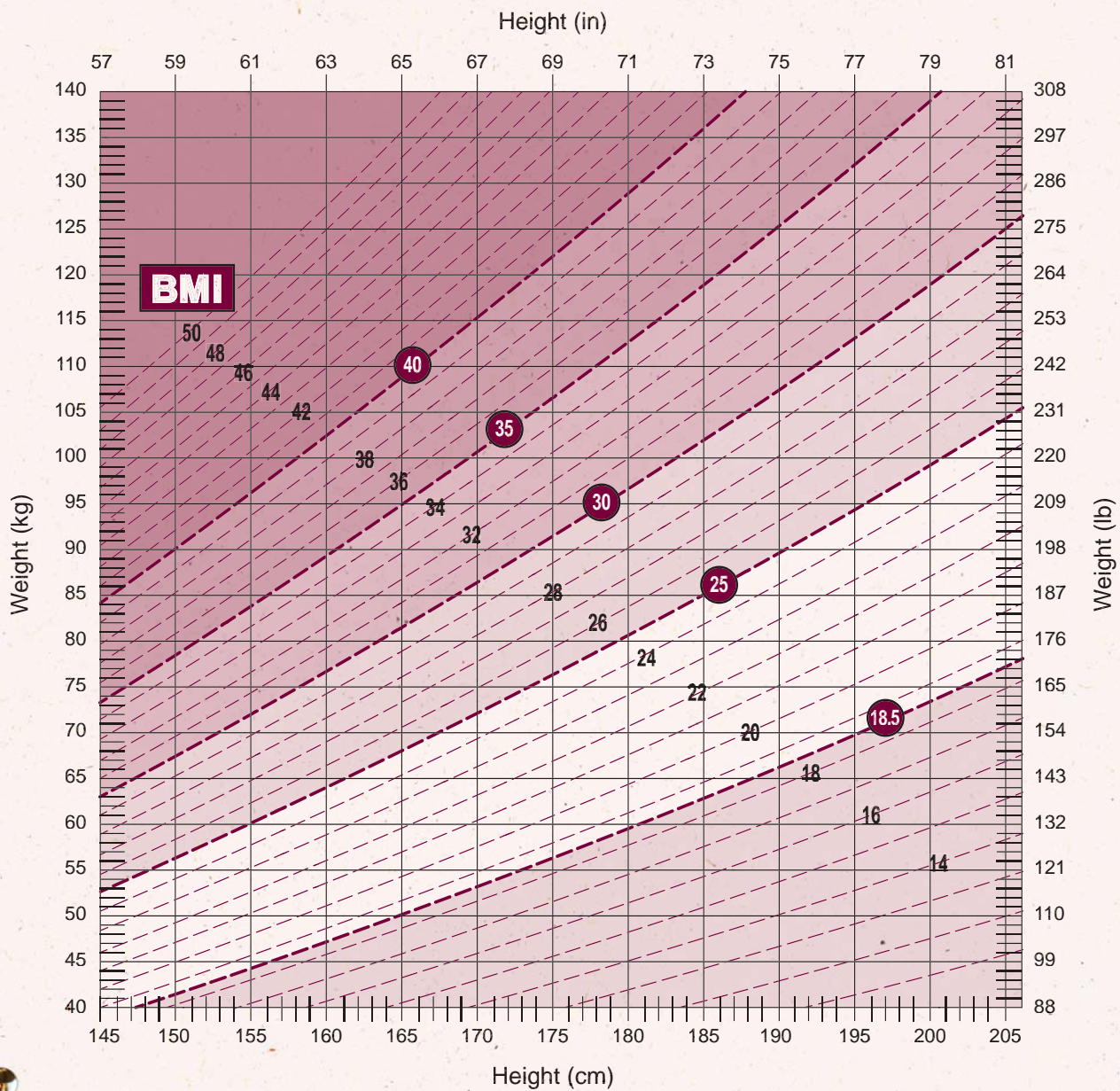
- a difficult delivery of their baby
- babies that are born large for their age or have a high birth weight (more than 9 lbs [4.1 kg])
- babies that will have problems with overweight and obesity later in childhood
- more difficulty losing the weight after pregnancy
- high blood sugar and high blood pressure during pregnancy

## Weight gain goals for women carrying twins

- For healthy pre-pregnancy BMI (18.5 – 24.9), your weight gain goal is 37 – 54 lbs (17 – 25 kg).
- For overweight pre-pregnancy BMI (25.0-29.9), your weight gain goal is 31 – 50 lbs (14 – 23 kg)
- For obese pre-pregnant BMI (30.0+), your weight gain goal is 25 – 42 lbs (11 – 19 kg).
- For women carrying more than two babies talk to your health care professional about how much weight you should be gaining.



## (BMI) Body Mass Index Chart



### How to use this chart

1. Use a straight edge to help locate the point on the chart where height (in or cm) and pre-pregnancy weight (lbs or kg) intersect.
2. Read the number on the dashed line closest to this point.

Example: A woman whose weight is 69 kg before pregnancy and is 173 cm tall has a pre-pregnancy BMI of approximately 23.



# How Much Weight is Healthy for You?

## Healthy weight gain

It is important to gain within the recommended guidelines for your health, and the health of your baby. The table below will help you find out how much weight gain will be healthy for you and your baby.

Weight category	Pre-pregnant BMI	Total weight gain for pregnancy	Weight gain rate in 2nd and 3rd trimesters*
Underweight	<18.5	28 – 40 lbs (12.5 – 18 kg)	1.0 – 1.3 lbs/week (0.44 – 0.58 kg/week)
Healthy Weight	18.5 – 24.9	25 – 35 lbs (11.5 – 16 kg)	0.8 – 1.0 lbs/week (0.35 – 0.5 kg/week)
Overweight	25.0 – 29.9	15 – 25 lbs (7 – 11.5 kg)	0.5 – 0.7 lbs/week (0.23 – 0.33 kg/week)
Obese	≥30.0	11 – 20 lbs (5 – 9 kg)	0.4 – 0.6 lbs/week (0.17 – 0.27 kg/week)

\* calculations assume a 1.1 – 4.4 lb (0.5 – 2.0 kg) weight gain in first trimester

## My pregnancy weight

Week #	Your Weight	Date	Week #	Your Weight	Date
Week 4			Week 32		
Week 8			Week 34		
Week 12			Week 36		
Week 16			Week 37		
Week 20			Week 38		
Week 24			Week 39		
Week 28			Week 40		

## Weight gain range goals

My weight gain range goal for 1st trimester \_\_\_\_\_

My weight gain range goal for 2nd trimester \_\_\_\_\_

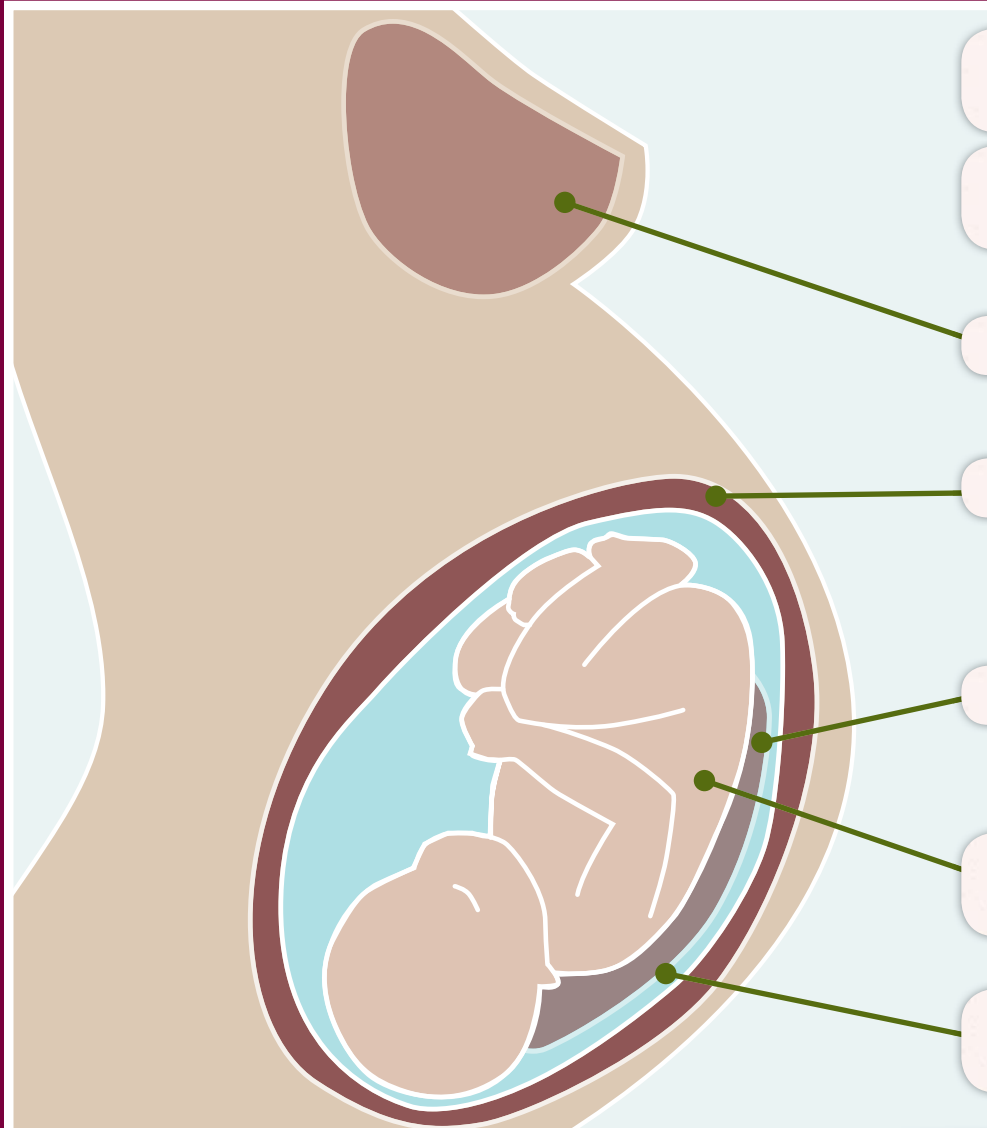
My weight gain range goal for 3rd trimester \_\_\_\_\_

My weight gain range goal in total  
(add goals for all 3 trimesters together) \_\_\_\_\_

Eat well and be active to help you gain the recommended amount of weight for a healthy pregnancy.



# Where is the Weight Going?



6 – 7 lbs (2.72 – 3.17 kg)  
blood and extra fluid

5 – 8 lbs (2.27 – 3.63 kg)  
muscle and fat

2 – 3 lbs (0.91 – 1.36 kg) breasts

2 – 3 lbs (0.91 – 1.36 kg) uterus

2 – 3 lbs (0.91 – 1.36 kg) placenta

6 – 8 lbs (2.72 – 3.63 kg)  
average baby

2 – 3 lbs (0.91 – 1.36 kg)  
amniotic fluid

## Overweight?

If you are overweight, now is not the time to lose weight. Talk to your health care provider about the recommended weight gain for your pre-pregnancy BMI and set goals specific to you.

**Average total weight gain of  
25 – 35 lbs (11.5 – 16.0 kg)**

## Underweight?

If you are underweight or struggling with an eating disorder, talk to your health care provider about working with a counsellor and dietitian throughout your pregnancy. Talk to these professionals about the right amount of weight gain for your pre-pregnancy BMI.



# Healthy Eating



The foods you eat before and during pregnancy prepare your body to support the growth and development of your baby. Eating nutritious foods gives your baby the best chance of a healthy beginning.

## **Eat small meals and snacks throughout the day**

Eat every 2 to 4 hours when you're awake to help you feel better and to provide a steady supply of nutrients to your growing baby. Skipping meals makes it hard to get all the nutrients you and your baby need.



# Plan Your Day

## Breakfast



- Whole wheat bannock
- Peanut butter
- Milk
- Pear
- Coffee
- Grapefruit

**Small amounts of caffeine** during pregnancy appear to be fine for most people. In general the recommendation for pregnant women is to consume no more than 300 mg/day or a little over two small (8 oz/237 ml) cups of coffee. Green and black teas also contain caffeine and are safe to drink in moderation.

## Morning snack



**Follow advice from Health Canada ([www.healthcanada.gc.ca/mercuryandfish](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/mercuryandfish))** to limit your exposure to environmental contaminants such as mercury. Check [www.albertaregulations.ca/fishingregs/index.html](http://www.albertaregulations.ca/fishingregs/index.html) for information about fish caught in Alberta.

**Fish to avoid as they are high in mercury include:** fresh or frozen tuna, shark, swordfish, escolar, marlin, and orange roughly.

- Dried cereal and dried fruit mix

- Grapefruit juice
- Cheddar cheese and crackers

## Lunch



- Butternut squash soup
- Tuna melt with cheese (light tuna and whole wheat Bun)
- Orange
- Milk

- Spaghetti and tomato sauce
- Meatballs
- Mixed green salad (oil and vinegar)
- Milk
- Grapes

## Afternoon snack

- Whole wheat pita wedges
- Hummus

- Celery stick
- Peanut butter

## Dinner



- Baked chicken
- Rice and broccoli
- Small glass of tomato juice
- Whole wheat bun
- Pear slices

**All meats, fish, poultry and eggs need to be thoroughly cooked.** Avoid these foods raw or undercooked. Avoid hot dogs and deli meats unless reheated until steaming hot.

**Herbal teas as harmful drugs?** Many herbal teas and herbs can act like harmful drugs which may affect your baby. Pregnant and lactating women can drink up to 2 – 3 cups a day of the following herbal teas: orange peel, ginger, red raspberry leaf, peppermint leaf and rose hip.

## Evening snack

- Popcorn
- Milk

- Apple crisp
- Milk

- Tea
- Rice pudding

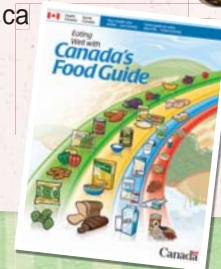
A helpful tool to stay aware of the amount and type of food you eat while you are pregnant or breastfeeding is Health Canada's Food Guide Servings Tracker <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/track-suivi/index-eng.php>.



## Recommended Daily Food Guide Servings

	Vegetables and Fruit	Grain Products	Milk and Alternatives	Meat and Alternatives	Extra food guide servings for pregnancy	Fluid amount for pregnancy
Female 19 – 50 years	7 – 8	6 – 7	2	2	2 – 3	2.3 L or 9 cups
Female 14 – 18 years	7	6	3 – 4		2 – 3	

To get your free copy, go to [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca) and follow the links or pick up a copy at a community health centre.



### Thursday

- Bran cereal w/raisins
- Milk in the bowl
- Orange quarters
- Coffee
- Water

**Vitamin C** increases iron absorption. Good sources of vitamin C are potatoes, red peppers, strawberries, citrus fruits and juices, tomatoes and broccoli.

- Slice of banana bread
- Tea

**Avoid eating any unpasteurized** cheeses, pates, milks and other dairy products. Read labels to be sure you are choosing products that are pasteurized.

- Date and Nut Mix
- Water

- Stir-fried beef with broccoli, bean sprouts, bok choy, carrots
- Noodles
- Water
- Fruit salad

- Digestive cookies
- Milk



### Friday

- Apple slices
- Tea

- Cheese & roast chicken sandwich (whole wheat bread)
- Borscht
- Cucumber slices
- Yogurt and strawberries
- Glass of water

- Water
- Orange cranberry loaf

- Dhal
- Green beans
- Raita
- Naan
- Milk
- Mango

- Diet soda
- Baby carrots

### Saturday

- Pancakes with saskatoon berry syrup
- Cantaloupe
- Milk
- Tea

- Bran muffin
- Tea

- Vegetable soup
- Quesadilla
- Apple
- Milk

**Fish** is an excellent source of protein and healthy fats that help the development of your baby's brain and eyes. *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* recommends choosing at least two food guide servings of fish per week.

### Alternative Sweeteners

**OK:** Moderate amounts of alternative sweeteners like aspartame (NutraSweet), sucralose (Splenda), or acesulfame K (Sunette) are considered safe during pregnancy.

**Not OK:** Avoid using saccharin and cyclamate (found in Sucryl, Sweet N'Low, Sugar Twin and Weight Watchers)

Pregnant and lactating women should discuss the use of stevia as an alternative sweetener with their physician or other health care professional.

### Sunday

- Whole wheat english muffin
- Cottage cheese with peaches
- Coffee
- Water

- Dried fruit bar
- Milk

- Pizza on a whole grain pita (chicken, peppers, cheddar cheese, mushrooms & tomato sauce)
- Tossed salad w/veggies
- Orange

- Pretzels
- Milk

- Baked salmon
- Mashed potatoes
- Green beans
- Carrot salad
- Milk
- Mixed berries

# How Much More Food?

## Extra Food for Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

You need an extra 2 to 3 food guide servings for your 2nd and 3rd trimesters of pregnancy and for breastfeeding. These extra foods provide extra nutrients and energy that you and your baby need.

**1st trimester – no extra calories needed**

**2nd trimester – about 350 healthy extra calories**

**3rd trimester – about 450 healthy extra calories**

**Breastfeeding – about 400 healthy extra calories**

## 350 calorie snacks



Fruit parfait — containing 3/4 cup (175 ml) plain yogurt (1 – 2% M.F.), 1/2 cup (125 ml) unsweetened berries, and 1/2 cup (125 ml) granola

*1 serving milk and alternatives,  
1 serving vegetables and fruit,  
1 serving grain products*



Granola bar, 8 raw baby carrots, and 1 cup (250 ml) of skim milk or fortified soy beverage

*1 serving grain products,  
1 serving vegetables and fruit,  
1 serving milk and alternatives*



Half a multi-grain bagel with 1.5 oz (50 g) light cheddar cheese, 1/2 cup (125 ml) blueberries and a glass of water

*1 serving grain products,  
1 serving milk and alternatives,  
1 serving vegetables and fruit*



1 cup (30 g) bran cereal with 1 cup (250 ml) skim milk, and a small apple

*1 serving grain products,  
1 serving milk and alternatives,  
1 serving vegetables and fruit*

## 450 calorie snacks



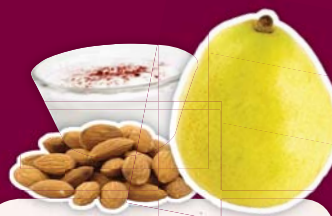
1 small pita with 1.5 oz (50 g) of cheese, 1 medium tomato

*1 serving grain products,  
1 serving milk and alternatives,  
1 serving vegetables and fruit*



1 bran muffin (70 – 105 g) with 3/4 cup (175 ml) yogurt

*2 – 3 servings grain products,  
1 serving milk and alternatives*



1 pear, 2 tbsp (30 ml) of almonds and 3/4 cup (175 ml) yogurt

*1 serving vegetables and fruit,  
1 serving meat and alternatives,  
1 serving milk and alternatives*



2 tbsp (30 ml) peanut butter on 1 slice rye bread, with 1/2 medium banana, and 1/2 cup (125 ml) of milk

*1 serving meat and alternatives,  
1 serving grain products,  
1/2 serving vegetables and fruit,  
1/2 serving milk and alternatives*



# Why Are Fibre and Fluids Important?

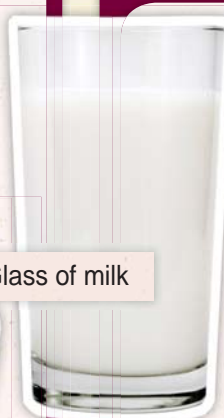
Fibre helps prevent and manage constipation and can decrease your risk for diarrhea and hemorrhoids. Getting enough fibre is also important to protect against certain types of cancer and heart disease.

Fruits and vegetables with the skin left on, whole grains and cereals, legumes (dried beans, lentils and peas) as well as seeds/nuts are all great examples of foods containing fibre.

Your body also needs plenty of fluid during pregnancy. Fluids can come from water, juice, soups, broth, milk and moderate amounts from coffee and safe teas. Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables also supplies a high level of fluid for your overall health.

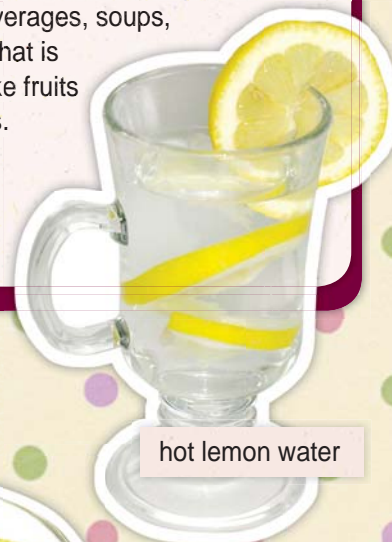


Glass of milk



## Daily requirement for fluid during pregnancy

2.3 L or about 9 cups per day. While this seems like a lot, keep in mind that this includes all beverages, soups, and the water that is part of foods like fruits and vegetables.



## Managing Constipation

Constipation affects up to one third of all pregnant women. It can often be prevented and managed with increased daily activity, plenty of fluids and enough fibre.

## Is money a problem?

If you have trouble buying enough food to meet the needs for pregnancy, talk to your health care provider. Some communities have special pregnancy programs that offer food and milk coupons, multivitamins containing folic acid and counselling.



**Choose at least 7 servings of vegetables and fruit. Make the most of the 6 recommended grain servings, choose at least half of them made with whole grain to get enough fibre.**

Bran muffin





# Reading Labels

Read food labels to help you to choose between similar types of packaged foods to make the healthiest choice. The ingredients list and Nutrition Facts Table will give you this information.

The **ingredient list** provides details of what is in the food. This list is always written in order of amounts: the package will contain most of the first ingredient and least of the last ingredient listed.

## Ingredients list

For example, this label was found on a box of wheat crackers:

- These crackers have more wheat flour than any other ingredient.
- These crackers have less flax meal than any other ingredient.

Avoid foods that use the words: shortening or hard margarine and hydrogenated oil or partially hydrogenated oil, known as industrial produced trans fat. These are all unhealthy fats.



## Nutrition facts table

The Nutrition Facts table provides information about one serving of food. Each package usually holds more than one serving of food, and the serving size may be more than a recommended Canada Food Guide serving size!

The label will tell you the amount of nutrients contained in one serving such as total fat (including saturated and Trans), cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrates (fibre and sugar), protein, vitamins (A and C) and minerals (calcium and iron).

**For example** this label tells us that one serving is six crackers. The serving size of 6 crackers (38g) listed is *more than* one recommended Canada Food Guide serving size for crackers which is (20 to 25 g). The label also tells us that these crackers contain unhealthy trans fat. These crackers *are not* a healthy choice.

Visit label reading and click on "interactive tools"  
[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/nutrition/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/nutrition/index-eng.php)

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size - 6 crackers (38 g)	
	% Daily Value
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 125	
Total Fat 5 g	8%
Saturated Fat 3 g	6%
+ Trans Fat 1 g	23%
Cholesterol 0 mg	5%
Sodium 560 mg	14%
Carbohydrate 15 g	
Fiber 4 g	
Sugar 6 g	
Protein 5 g	
Vitamin A	0%
Vitamin C	17%
Calcium	3%
Iron	3%

**For example**, this cracker label tells us the food has 23% sodium per serving. These crackers provide a *large amount of sodium*. For a healthy choice, choose crackers with 5% or less sodium per serving.



The **% Daily Value (% DV)** lets you know if a food has a little or a lot of nutrients. As a quick guide:

**5% daily value or less is little** — the food provides a small amount of the nutrient.

Nutrients you may want less of are:

- Fat
- Saturated and Trans fats
- Sodium (salt)

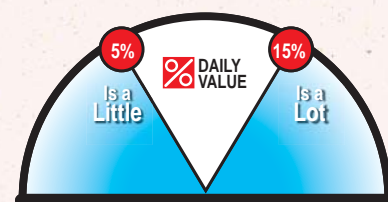
**15% daily value or more is a lot** — the food provides a large amount of the nutrient.

Nutrients you may want more of are:

- Calcium
- Iron
- Fibre
- Vitamin A
- Vitamin C

The **% Daily Value (% DV)** lets you know if a food has a little or a lot of a nutrient (i.e fat, sodium [salt], sugar). Look for it in the **Nutrition Facts table** on food packages.

As a rule of thumb: 5% DV is little and 15% DV is a lot.



You can use the % DV to choose products that are higher in nutrients you want more of (such as fibre, iron, calcium, Vitamin A and C) and lower in nutrients you want less of (such as fat, and sodium [salt]).

## Eating Less Sodium (Salt)

**Eating less sodium (salt)** can help you stay healthy and feel your best. Most sodium comes from processed foods such as cheese, deli meats, pizza, sauces and soups. Read labels to make healthy choices. Aim for 5% or less Daily Value (DV) of sodium per serving.



# Dealing with Common Discomforts

## Nausea and vomiting (morning sickness)

**Cause:** Your changing hormones, increased fatigue and the increased pressure of your baby can all contribute to morning sickness.

Morning sickness usually occurs in the first three months but can continue longer and can occur at any time of the day.

### What you can do to help:

- **Eat small frequent meals**, every 1 - 2 hours. Eat foods that appeal to you. Small amounts of food in your stomach usually helps with nausea.
- **Let others cook.** Use the stove fan, open windows and leave the kitchen when possible to reduce smell of food.
- **Avoid foods** that make you feel ill or have strong odours.
- **Drink fluids** between meals, not with meals.
- **Limit caffeine, chocolate and high fat foods.**
- **Eat a snack at bedtime** since having some food in your stomach reduces nausea.
- **Get up slowly** in the morning and take a few bites of dry crackers, toast or plain cookies that you can stash as bedside snacks.
- **Avoid brushing teeth immediately after vomiting.** Rinse mouth with water, a fluoridated mouthwash or a solution of baking soda and water after vomiting. This may help to prevent damage to your teeth.
- **Get plenty of rest** since nausea tends to worsen when you are tired. Try napping during the day.
- **Get plenty of fresh air** and avoid warm places as feeling hot can add to nausea.
- **Talk to your health care professional** about medications to help you with severe nausea and vomiting.
- **Call your health care professional** if you vomit more than twice a day or cannot keep fluid down.



## Heartburn

**Cause:** Your pregnancy hormones can slow the movement of food through your stomach. Your growing baby puts pressure on your stomach causing heartburn due to back up of stomach contents.

### What you can do to help:

- **Avoid foods** that make you feel ill.
- **Reduce caffeine, chocolate and high fat foods.**
- **Eat small**, frequent meals.
- **Drink liquids** between meals and not with the meal.
- **Good posture** helps digestion.
- **Walk** after your meals.
- **Avoid lying down** for two hours after a meal.
- Sleep with the head of your bed **raised slightly**.
- **Talk to your health care provider** about medications to help you with heartburn.





## Constipation

**Cause:** Your pregnancy hormones can slow movement in your intestines. As your baby grows he/she will put increased pressure on your intestines making it difficult to have bowel movements.

### What you can do to help:

- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Aim for at least 9 cups (2.3 L) of fluids per day.
- **Eat high fibre foods** such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains. (See page 13).
- **Walk every day** (unless advised not to by your health care professional).
- **Exercise regularly** (unless advised not to by your health care professional).
- **Talk to your health care professional** about fibre supplements and medications for constipation.



## Food cravings

**Cause:** Unknown

### What you can do to help:

Allow yourself to have small servings occasionally of the less nutritious foods that you may be craving, but ensure that you are still eating a well balanced diet.

Cravings for non-food items like dirt, detergent, starch and other non-food items is known as pica. If this occurs, contact your health care professional. Do not eat these items as they are toxic to you and your baby.





# Changes in You

The experience of pregnancy will be different for every woman. Not all women will experience all of these physical changes and feelings.

## 1st trimester (Weeks 1 – 12)

**Weight gain:** Often little to no weight gain

**Your body is making two special organs to help support the pregnancy called the placenta and the amniotic sac.**

### Possible physical changes:

- Skin blemishes or dryness
- Gums may be tender and bleed easily throughout your pregnancy
- Vaginal dryness

### Possible physical feelings:

- Tired, breasts are tender
- Heartburn/morning sickness/nausea
- Excitement and anxiety of parenting and childbirth
- Decreased sexual drive

**Movement:** Can't feel the baby yet

## 2nd trimester (Weeks 13 – 28)

**Weight gain:** Healthy weight gain, if you have a healthy pre-pregnancy BMI, is 0.8 – 1.0 lb per week (0.35 – 0.5 kg per week) from 12 weeks onward. Should be "showing" now.

### Possible physical changes:

- Breasts have grown
- Color spots on face, stomach and nipples
- Face and body hair may grow and darken in colour
- Blood sugar may be higher due to hormones

### Possible physical feelings:

- Heartburn
- Backache and discomfort in your ribs
- Often may become more comfortable with being pregnant
- Increased sexual interest

**Movement:** May be able to feel baby kick as early as 16 weeks

## 3rd trimester (Weeks 29 – 40)

**Weight gain:** Healthy weight gain, if you have a healthy pre-pregnancy BMI, is still 0.8 – 1.0 lb per week (0.35 – 0.5 kg per week). Your belly will grow and show the most during this trimester.

### Possible physical appearance:

- Spider or varicose veins appear
- Nipples become darker and wider and may leak milk
- Stretch marks (often fade after birth)
- Swollen feet, ankles and hands

### Possible physical feelings:

- Sleeping is uncomfortable and disrupted
- Dizzy and lightheaded
- Urinating more often

**Movement:** You may feel the muscles in your uterus getting tight or hard and then releasing slowly. These are called Braxton-Hicks contractions. They are painless and irregular and last from a few seconds up to two minutes. You may have them more often in the last few weeks of pregnancy, right up to the start of labour.





# Active Living

Pregnancy may seem like the perfect time to sit back and relax. You may feel tired and have aches and pains in your back and feet. But unless you're experiencing pregnancy complications, activity will do you and your baby more good than sitting back and relaxing.

## Benefits of physical activity during pregnancy

It may be a bit harder to see the benefits of physical activity as fatigue sets in and morning sickness begins. However, even when you are feeling tired, regular activity will improve the quality of your pregnancy. Here are some of the benefits of regular physical activity during pregnancy:

### Provide the strength and stamina you need for labour and delivery

Giving birth requires strength and stamina, both of which are enhanced through consistent moderate physical activity. Having control over your breathing can help you manage pain and if you experience prolonged labour, increased endurance will be a real help. Additionally, some research has shown that fetuses of women who exercised during pregnancy may tolerate labour better than those of the non-exercisers.

### Reduce stress and control mood swings

Pregnancy and becoming a parent can be an overwhelming life experience. It can cause you to feel a range of emotions from happiness to anxiety to sadness. Physical activity can improve your mood. Pregnant women who stay active seem to have better self-esteem and a reduced risk of postpartum depression and anxiety. Physical activity can help pregnant women to cope better with stress, have a better state of mind and sleep better.

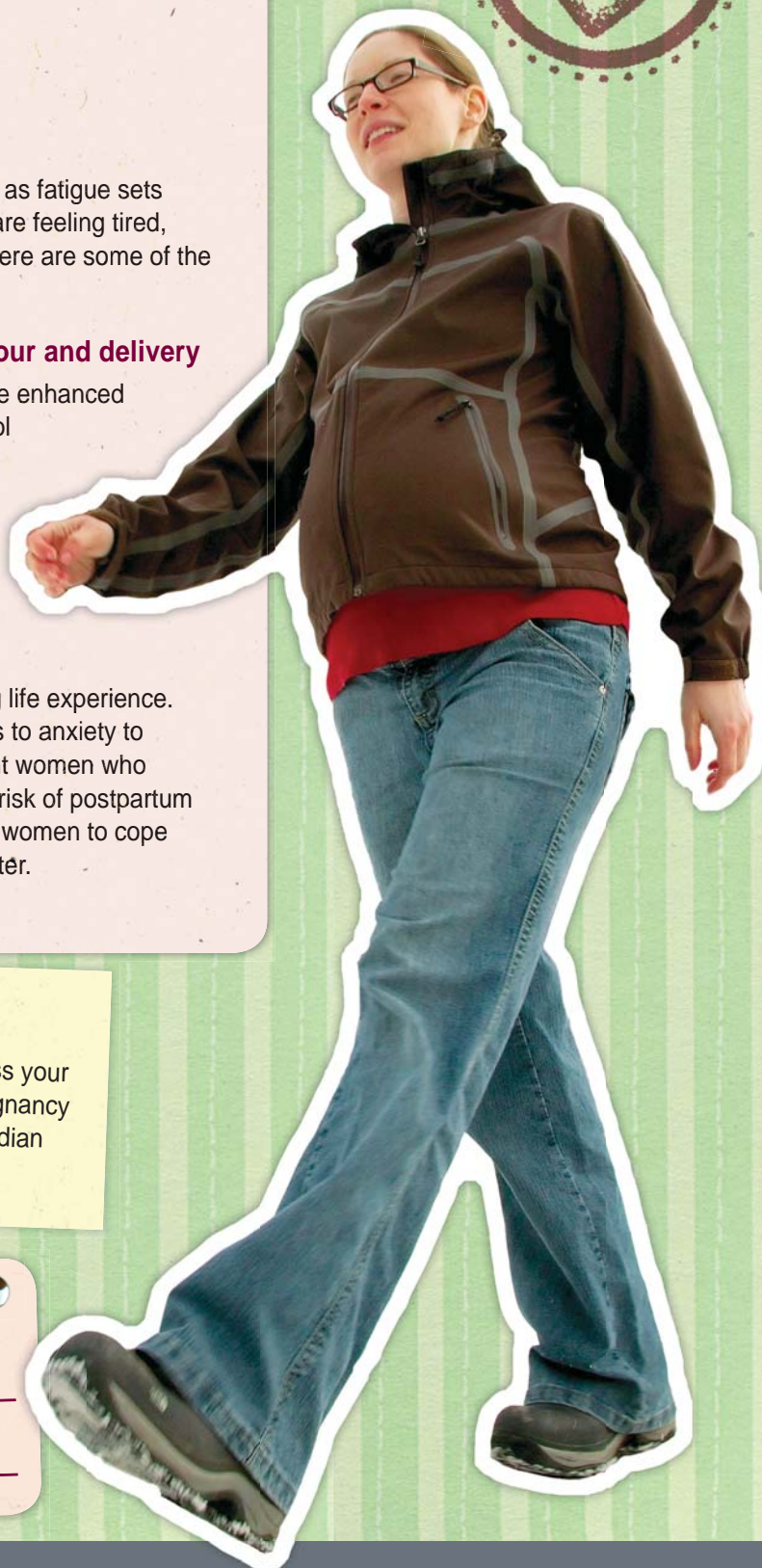
### Exercise Before, During and After Pregnancy

If you would like your health care professional to assess your readiness for activity check out the PARmed-X for Pregnancy Physical Activity Readiness questionnaire on the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology website: [www.csep.ca](http://www.csep.ca).

### Music to exercise to:

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### More Exercise, Less Diabetes

Research shows that babies of mothers who exercised during pregnancy are at lower risk of developing diabetes and have also shown to score higher on mental tests at age five.

### Manage some of the discomforts of pregnancy

Throughout your pregnancy you may experience different levels of swelling, leg cramps, shortness of breath, backaches, varicose veins and constipation. When you're inactive for long periods of time, you'll only enhance your discomfort as your muscles tighten and your blood circulation and energy drops. Physical activity gets the heart pumping, improves blood flow to all areas of the body and helps move fluid within cells. Movement may ease back ache and can improve your posture by strengthening and toning muscles in your back, buttocks and thighs.

### Improve your energy levels

Pregnancy will cause you to feel fatigue in situations that would normally be manageable. Regular movement such as walking, swimming or cycling strengthens your cardiovascular system and increases your stamina. Resistance activities like weight training or yoga keep muscles strong and toned so you'll need less effort to engage in day-to-day activities. Not only is exercise energizing, but it can help you relax and reduce stress, which will help you wind down more easily at the end of the day.

### Promote healthy weight management

Weight gain is a normal part of pregnancy, but many women worry about gaining too much extra weight. Physical activity can help you manage your weight better and your body will have an easier time bouncing back after you give birth.

### Decrease your risk of developing diabetes during pregnancy and/or manage existing diabetes

Regular physical activity not only reduces the risk of developing diabetes during pregnancy but can help manage blood sugar levels in those who have it. Physical activity increases the efficiency of your body's own insulin (the hormone that regulates blood sugars in your body).



### Activities I can do:

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### Ask your health care professional

No matter your fitness level or experience with pregnancy and exercise, it's essential that you visit your health care professional **BEFORE** you begin exercising to ensure a safe, healthy and active pregnancy.



## Is it safe for every pregnant woman to exercise?

For most healthy mothers-to-be with no pregnancy-related problems, physical activity is not only safe but recommended. For some pregnant women with health issues or pregnancy complications, exercising may pose risks. In either case, consult your health care professional before beginning a physical activity program even if you were already active before your pregnancy.

### Safer activities

- Walking, jogging, stationary cycling, group-led classes (low/moderate impact), dance classes, swimming, pool aerobics, yoga\*, pilates\* or resistance training.\*

\*These activities may include some positions that should be avoided while pregnant. Talk to your health care professional, ask a qualified (i.e. Certified Exercise Physiologist) instructor and listen to your body.

### Higher risk activities

Higher risk activities include high impact activities that could increase stress on your joints, as well as activities that could cause you to lose your balance and fall, potentially causing harm to you and your baby.

- Use caution when considering: ice hockey, cycling, downhill skiing or snowboarding, horseback riding, cycling, gymnastics or climbing.
- You should not scuba dive while you are pregnant as it is not safe for your baby.

**Listening to your body** — You know what is best for you and your baby. It's OK to lower the intensity of your physical activity during pregnancy if fatigue or discomfort is present. Avoid exercising so strenuously that you don't have energy for the rest of your day. This is especially important in the third trimester when your baby's needs for nutrition and growth are the greatest.

**Staying cool** — To ensure you and your baby do not become overheated, avoid exercising in warm and humid climates (including pools where the water temperature is high) and avoid using saunas and hot tubs.

**Lightening up** — Avoid heavy lifting tasks and prolonged standing during pregnancy, particularly in the third trimester.

## Signs you should stop exercising

**Consult your health care professional immediately if you experience any of the following:**

- Blurred vision, dizziness or excessive fatigue.
- Severe nausea, shortness of breath or chest pain.
- Unexplained abdominal pain, contractions or vaginal bleeding.
- Any "gush" of fluid from the vagina.
- New or increased back or pelvic pain.
- Sudden swelling of the ankles, hands or face.
- Pain, redness and swelling in the calf of one leg.
- Persistent headaches.
- Failure to gain weight.
- Absence of — or a change in — fetal movements.
- Elevated heart rate or blood pressure following exercise (after one hour).





# Exercise tips

As your pregnancy progresses, your body will go through many changes that will impact your level of energy and your ability to keep active. Refer to the next page (page 23) for trimester specific guidelines.



## Get prepared for physical activity

- Wear a supportive bra as well as loose clothing that will breathe and keep you from overheating. If outdoors, wear a hat and sunglasses for added protection.
- Purchase running shoes with good support and cushioning. To ensure proper fit, purchase shoes later in the day when feet are usually a bit swollen.
- Carry a water bottle, and take small, frequent drinks throughout your workout session.



You can locate a Certified Exercise Physiologist (CEP) in Alberta by visiting the Provincial Fitness Unit website at [www.provincialfitnessunit.ca](http://www.provincialfitnessunit.ca) and following the link to Member Directory.

You can find specific exercises that are safe during pregnancy in the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology resource entitled, "Active Living During Pregnancy" ([www.csep.ca](http://www.csep.ca)).





## 1st trimester

- If you have been active prior to your pregnancy, continue your physical activity program throughout your pregnancy **as long as you feel comfortable**. Some modifications may be needed as your pregnancy progresses.
- During aerobic activity **monitor the duration and intensity of your sessions**. Exercise at a level so you are able to talk comfortably (without laboured breathing) during your workout.
- During strength training, **avoid holding your breath** and breathe out on the effort phase of each movement. Avoid lifting to failure, and choose a weight that you can lift comfortably for 12 – 15 repetitions. Rest sufficiently between sets.

## 2nd trimester

- If you were inactive prior to becoming pregnant, your second trimester **may be the best time to start an exercise program** when the discomforts of early pregnancy, such as nausea and vomiting, have usually passed.
- After the fourth month of pregnancy, **avoid lying on your back** while exercising. This may cause light-headedness and can interrupt blood flow to your baby.
- Discuss your physical activity progress with your health care professional at every visit and adjust your plan accordingly.
- Abdominal activities may need to be modified to **avoid lying on your back** and as these muscles begin to weaken.

## 3rd trimester

- You may continue with your physical activity program. If exercise becomes uncomfortable, **consider changing** the exercise and/or decreasing duration and intensity.
- Listen to your body and give yourself permission to rest.
- By the third trimester your center of gravity has changed and may cause you to lose your balance more easily. **Watch your step at all times**, but particularly when exercising.
- **Choose activities with less risk of falling:** stationary bike, walking, swimming or pool exercises.
- **Stretching should be gentle** as presence of the hormone relaxin can contribute to pain and overstretching.





# Staying motivated

During pregnancy it is important to find ways to stay motivated when fatigue and discomfort may be convincing you to take a break. Start by choosing activities you enjoy that fit into your daily schedule, listen to your body and use these tips for additional motivation!

1.

**Start small.** You don't need to join a gym or buy expensive workout clothes to get in shape. Just get moving. Go for a daily walk through your neighbourhood, try a prenatal exercise video right in your living room or even dance to your favourite music!

2.

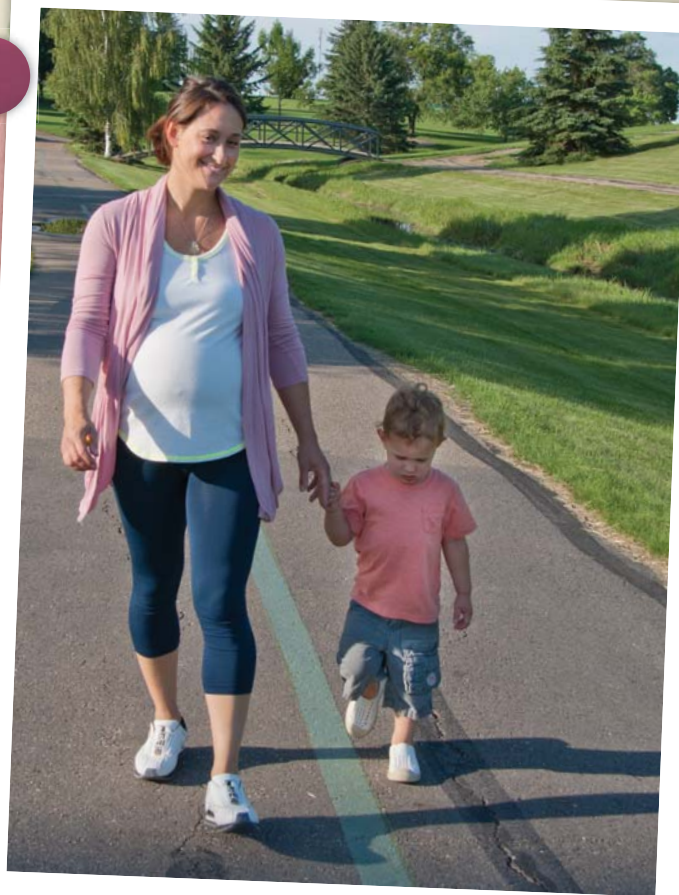
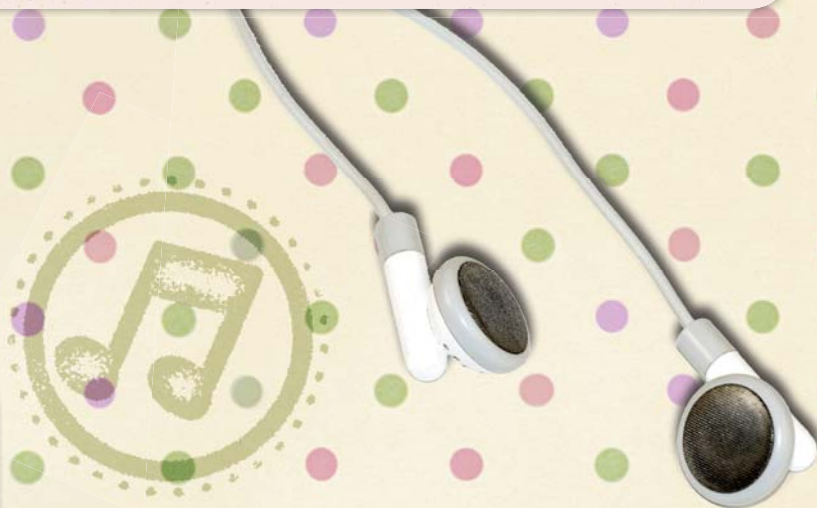
**Find a workout buddy.** Exercise is more enjoyable and interesting if you don't have to do it alone. Use the time to connect with a friend. Better yet, involve the whole family.

3.

**Motivate with music.** Listen to music or an audio book while you exercise. Choose upbeat songs to energize your workout. Just remember to keep alert if using headphones outdoors.

4.

**Join a class.** Many fitness and community centres offer classes designed for pregnant women. It can be very reassuring to exercise with other pregnant women. Choose a class that fits your interests and schedule.







5.

**Try something new.** Get creative with your active time. Consider hiking, rowing, dancing or even Tai Chi!

6.

**Track your progress.** Record what you did during each exercise session, how long you exercised and how you felt afterward. Recording your efforts can help you stay motivated and also track changes as your pregnancy progresses.

7.

**It's OK to take a breather.** Your tolerance for strenuous exercise will decrease as your pregnancy progresses. If your body tells you to take a rest, then listen! A nice warm bath can be a great way to relax and ease aches and pains. Avoid warm baths immediately after exercising and always avoid hot tubs or baths with temperatures above 38°C (100°F).

8.

**Reward yourself.** After each exercise session, take a few minutes to sit down and relax. Reflect on what you've just accomplished and enjoy the good feelings that exercise gives you. This type of internal reward can help you make a long-term commitment to regular exercise. External rewards can help, too. When you reach a longer range goal, treat yourself to a new pair of walking shoes or new music to enjoy while you exercise.



# Make Healthy Choices When Pregnant



## Avoid tobacco

Tobacco use and second-hand smoke exposure lead to many increased health risks for women. If you use tobacco products or are exposed to second-hand smoke during pregnancy and breastfeeding, toxic chemicals are passed along to your baby and your baby will get less oxygen and nutrients that it needs for growth and development.

Women who quit using tobacco and eliminate second-hand smoke exposure before or early in pregnancy will:

- Increase their fertility
- Reduce their risk of miscarriage
- Reduce their risk of pre-term delivery
- Reduce their risk of having a low birth weight baby (Babies that are underweight at birth have a higher risk for infections and other health problems)
- Reduce their baby's risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)

If you use tobacco products, the best thing you can do to protect your health and your baby's health is to quit. It is never too late to quit using tobacco. Tobacco use is often a powerful addiction and quitting is a series of small challenges that you can deal with one by one and you may want to start with cutting down. For more information and support with quitting, talk to your health care provider or contact AlbertaQuits.

**AlbertaQuits** is a free, convenient, personalized support to quit smoking or spit tobacco.

• 1-866-710-QUIT • [albertaquits.ca](http://albertaquits.ca)

For information and to find an Alberta Health Services addiction services office near you, please call the toll-free confidential 24-hour Helpline at 1-866-332-2322.



## Avoid alcohol

During pregnancy **no amount of alcohol is safe** to drink at any time. Alcohol severely affects the growth and development of your baby and can cause brain damage, permanent birth defects and mental disabilities. There is no cure for alcohol-related birth defects and brain damage. The harm will last a lifetime for your baby.

- Drinking alcohol during breastfeeding can also affect your baby since alcohol can end up in the breast milk.
- Drink water, milk, fruit or vegetable juice instead of beer, wine or spirits.

For information and to find an Alberta Health Services addiction services office near you, please call the toll-free confidential 24-hour Helpline at 1-866-332-2322.



## Illegal drugs and prescription medications

There are many prescription, over-the-counter and street drugs that will seriously affect the health of your baby if taken during pregnancy or breastfeeding. Ask your health care professional or pharmacist before taking any home remedies, medications or drugs.

If you are struggling with an addiction to drugs, ask your health care professional to refer you to an addictions program or consult your community health centre.

For information and to find an Alberta Health Services addiction services office near you, please call the toll-free confidential 24-hour Helpline at 1-866-332-2322.

## Testing and care

For more information on testing and care for women during pregnancy, talk to your health care professional, or call: Health Link Alberta 1-866-408-LINK (5465). Information is also available at [myhealth.alberta.ca](http://myhealth.alberta.ca)



# Post Pregnancy: Taking Care of Mom

Taking care of yourself, eating healthy food and gradually returning to an active lifestyle is just as important as taking care of your new baby. Your healthy eating and physical activity habits are also important to help set a good example for your child for an entire lifetime. Over time, healthy eating, breastfeeding and activity levels can also help you to lose your pregnancy weight. Be patient, weight loss can take up to one year.

## Post pregnancy nutrition

Continue taking your multivitamin containing folic acid throughout your childbearing years.

Most food can be enjoyed while breastfeeding. Eat a variety of foods from *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. If you are breastfeeding continue to eat an extra 2 – 3 food guide servings each day (equivalent to approximately 350 – 400 calories) to support a healthy milk supply for your baby, as well as gradual weight loss. A healthy diet also provides you with the nutrients and energy you need to recover from the pregnancy and delivery.

Daily requirements for fluid are at their highest during breastfeeding at approximately 13 cups (3.25 L) per day. Drink fluid such as water and milk throughout the day.

During and after breastfeeding, follow the recommendations in *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. To download a copy visit [www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide](http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide).



## Breastfeeding is the healthiest choice for you and your baby.

Breastfeeding gives many benefits to both you and your baby. Breast milk is all your baby needs for the first six months of life, along with a vitamin D supplement. Health Canada recommends breastfeeding continue until your baby is 2 years or older.

## How will I achieve a healthy weight?

Eating well, staying active and breastfeeding may help you achieve a healthy weight after your baby comes. Achieving a healthy weight before your next pregnancy will help you have a healthy pregnancy and baby.



## When can I begin physical activity again?

If pregnancy and delivery are uncomplicated, a mild exercise program of walking, pelvic floor exercises and stretching all muscle groups may begin immediately. Pelvic floor exercises are especially important after delivery to reduce the risk of future urinary issues. Returning to physical activity after pregnancy can also decrease the risks of postpartum depression – but only if it is stress relieving and not stress provoking.

The length, difficulty and type of your delivery will determine how soon you should return to a normal exercise routine. Most types of exercise may be resumed at a decreased intensity and duration. Start slowly and give your body time to heal. Once again, keep discussing any concerns you may have with your health care professional and listen to your body.

Enjoy this time after birth to bond with your baby. Many of the physical and emotional changes that occur with pregnancy will persist for several months after delivery. In the coming weeks and months you will also be balancing your responsibilities as a new mom. Pace your efforts and don't let yourself get overly tired. Tend to your baby's needs and enjoy your time together.

### Exercise guidelines

**For cardiovascular training**, walking is a safe and effective way to get moving. At this time, don't be too concerned with weight loss. As you eat well and begin physical activity, your weight will naturally adjust. Gradually build from 15 minute walks to 30 minutes or more, most days of the week.

**For strength training**, do Kegel and core exercises as well as body resistance exercises like walking lunges and pushups as these will strengthen legs and upper torso and also improve your balance.

### Remaining smoke free

For both your health and the health of your baby, it is still recommended that you not smoke. In order to decrease the risk of ear infections, colds, SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) and respiratory problems in your baby, smoking should not be allowed near your baby or in the baby's home.

### Kegel exercises (i.e. pelvic floor exercises)

1. Relax and sit or stand comfortably.
2. Find your pelvic muscle. Imagine that you are trying to hold back urine, or a bowel movement. Squeeze the muscles you would use to do that.
3. Tighten the muscles for 5 to 10 seconds.
4. Do not hold your breath – breathe normally.
5. Do not tighten your stomach or buttocks – keep them relaxed.
6. Now relax the muscles for about 10 seconds.
7. Repeat the squeeze-hold-relax routine, 12 to 20 times.

**Baby Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Birthdate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Weight:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date I plan to start exercising again:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Moms I can invite to exercise with me:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





## Contacts and Websites

### **Alberta Centre for Active Living**

[www.centre4activeliving.ca](http://www.centre4activeliving.ca)

### **Alberta Health Addiction Services**

Confidential 24-hour helpline

1-866-332-2322

### **Alberta Quits (tobacco cessation)**

[albertaquits.ca](http://albertaquits.ca)

1-866-710-QUIT

### **Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation**

[asrpwf.ca](http://asrpwf.ca)

### **Allergy & Asthma Information Association**

[www.aaia.ca](http://www.aaia.ca)

### **Be Fit For Life Network**

[www.befitforlife.ca](http://www.befitforlife.ca)

### **Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology**

[www.csep.ca](http://www.csep.ca)

### **National Eating Disorder Information Centre**

<http://www.nedic.ca>

### **Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide**

[www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca)

### **Food Allergy Network**

[www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)

### **Growing Food Security in Alberta**

[www.foodsecurityalberta.ca](http://www.foodsecurityalberta.ca)

### **Health Link Alberta**

1-866-408-LINK (5465)

### **Healthy U**

[www.healthyalberta.com](http://www.healthyalberta.com)

### **Inform Alberta**

[www.informalberta.ca](http://www.informalberta.ca)

### **My Health Alberta**

[myhealth.alberta.ca](http://myhealth.alberta.ca)

### **Nutrition Counselling – Healthy Pregnancy Weight Gain**

[www.albertahealthservices.ca/  
nutritioninpregnancy.asp](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/nutritioninpregnancy.asp)

### **Parent Link Alberta (Alberta Government)**

[www.parentlinkalberta.ca](http://www.parentlinkalberta.ca)

### **Provincial Fitness Unit**

[provincialfitnessunit.ca](http://provincialfitnessunit.ca)

### **Sport Alberta**

[www.sportalberta.ca/links](http://www.sportalberta.ca/links)







## Call for help

### Health Link Alberta

For health advice or information, contact Health Link Alberta to speak to a registered nurse 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-866-408-LINK (5465).

To look for services in your area please visit Inform Alberta at [www.informalberta.ca](http://www.informalberta.ca)



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