

# The Healthy Pregnancy Guide

Having a baby can be an exciting time in your life! However, many women feel nervous about it too. People receive lots of different advice, making it hard to know what is best for you and your baby. This guide will help to answer some questions that you may have about your pregnancy.

## Nutrients

Take a **prenatal vitamin** with folic acid, iron & Vitamin D daily.

It is important to eat a healthy balanced diet. See **Canada's Food Guide** for tips.

Here are some important nutrients for pregnancy and where to find them:

**Folate:** broccoli, spinach, lentils, peas, beans, dark leafy greens, citrus  
**Calcium:** milk, firm cheese, yogurt, dark leafy vegetables  
**Iron:** beef, chicken, shrimp, fish, tofu  
**Omega-3:** salmon, trout, light canned tuna, fortified eggs

## Exercise

If your doctor says exercise is safe, try to keep up a regular fitness routine.

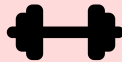
### Cardio Exercise:

Start with 15 minutes at a time, work up to 30 minutes on most days of the week.



### Strength Exercise:

Stick with light or medium resistance. Avoid exercises that might make you lose your balance!



Use the "Talk Test" as your guide – you should be able to chat without feeling short of breath.

## Weight

Your ideal weight gain is based on your pre-pregnancy BMI (body mass index). Here are some targets for normal weight gain, spread out over your nine months of pregnancy:

**BMI less than 18.5:**  
12.5 to 18 kgs or  
28 to 40 lbs

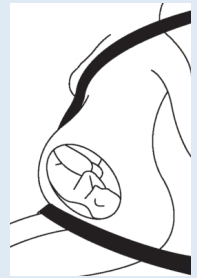
**BMI 18.5 to 24.9:**  
11.5 to 16 kgs or  
25 to 35 lbs

**BMI 25.0 to 29.9:**  
7 to 11.5 kgs or  
15 to 25 lbs

**BMI more than 30.0:**  
Less than 7 kgs or  
Less than 15 lbs

## Safety

Always wear your **seatbelt** in the car, with the belt across the hips & between the breasts.



Some **over the counter** medicines cause harm to your growing baby (for example, **ibuprofen**). Talk to your doctor or pharmacist before using new medicine.

If you are a victim or at risk of **abuse**, talk to your doctor today about a plan for safety.

You will need an extra 340-450 calories per day in your second and third trimesters. This is to help support your growing baby. It does not mean that you need to eat for two!

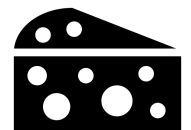
Here are some healthy snack ideas:

Crackers (5) with 2 tablespoons of peanut butter (250 calories)

Apple with 2 ounces of firm cheese (280 calories)

Whole wheat pita with 4 tablespoons of hummus (250 calories)

Hard-boiled egg with toast (150 calories)



If you have vaginal bleeding or belly pain, talk to a doctor right away.

**Pregnancy less than 20 weeks:** Go to the closest Emergency Room

**Pregnancy more than 20 weeks:** Go to the Labour and Delivery Unit

# The Healthy Pregnancy Guide



## Alcohol

Alcohol can cause harm to your baby's brain. It can also lead to miscarriage or early labour. Avoiding alcohol during pregnancy is the safest option.



## Cigarettes

When you smoke cigarettes, your baby gets less oxygen and nutrients. This can lead to problems like low birth weight. It is never too late to quit or cut back.



## Marijuana

Marijuana can harm your baby's brain, causing behaviour problems down the road. Avoiding marijuana during pregnancy is the safest option.



## Street Drugs

Cocaine can limit the blood supply to your baby and cause early labour. Heroin can restrict baby growth. Amphetamines can make your blood pressure too high.

If you use any of these substances, talk to your doctor about ways to help you quit or cut down.



## Fish

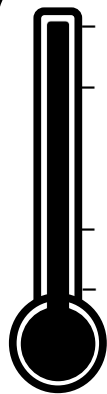
Fish is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, protein and iron. Eat **2 servings of fish per week**, such as salmon or halibut. **CAUTION:** Avoid fish that is high in mercury, such as fresh tuna, shark, marlin & swordfish. Avoid raw fish like sushi and ceviche. Stick to "light" canned tuna.

## Deli Meat & Hot Dogs

Reheat cold cuts, hot dogs & smoked fish to steaming. **CAUTION:** Avoid pâtés and meat or vegetable spreads.



## Safe Internal Temperatures



- 180°F/82°C: Whole chicken
- 165°F/74°C: Chicken pieces, reheated leftovers, hot dogs, egg dishes, casseroles, fish
- 160°F/71°C: Ground meat, pork
- 145°F/63°C: Beef, lamb, veal

## Food Safety Tips

Wash your hands and utensils after handling meat. Use separate cutting boards for vegetables. Don't store cooked or fresh meat for more than 3 days in the fridge before eating it.



## Dairy & Cheese

Pasteurized dairy and firm cheeses are a good source of calcium and safe to eat. **CAUTION:** Avoid soft or unpasteurized dairy, such as Brie, Camembert, blue cheese and queso fresco.

## Eggs

Fully cooked or pasteurized eggs are a good source of protein and safe to eat. **CAUTION:** Avoid raw or runny eggs, found in Caesar salad, raw cookie/cake dough and homemade mayonnaise.

**Caffeine.** Drink no more than 1-2 cups of coffee (or 300 mg of caffeine) per day.

Cat feces may contain harmful parasites. Protect you and your baby by using gloves when gardening or changing cat litter.

**Heat.** Don't let yourself get overheated! Avoid or limit your time in hot tubs and saunas.

**Society for Obstetricians & Gynecologists:**  
<https://www.pregnancyinfo.ca>

**Health Canada:**  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/healthy-living/healthy-pregnancy.html>

**Author:** Jenna Dickson, MD  
Dalhousie Family Medicine  
2018