

Gentle Beginnings Midwifery
Educational Handout

Healthy Eating in Pregnancy

Why eat healthy?

Eating well will help you feel good throughout your pregnancy as well as make sure you have everything you need to grow a healthy baby. It will also ensure a proper weight gain and help prevent complications during your pregnancy (for example: high blood pressure, low iron and diabetes).

How to eat healthy?

Choosing a variety of foods from all four food groups will ensure you have the appropriate nutrients for you and your baby.

Key Nutrient	Importance	Where to find them?
Carbohydrates	Energy	Grain products (whole wheat bread, low sugar cereal)
Vitamins and Folates	Development and growth of baby; preventing neural tube defects and certain other malformations	Fruits and vegetables such as broccoli, carrots, asparagus, spinach, lettuce, peas, bananas, apples, oranges etc.
Calcium	Bone development and growth (for you and baby)	Milk products (milk, yogurt, cheese), broccoli. You should have 3-4 servings per day.
Iron	Your blood supply increases up to 50% in pregnancy- iron will help with the development of blood cells as well as the growth of your baby and the placenta.	Meats and alternatives (fish, chicken, beef, eggs, peanut butter, nuts, tofu, beans); Vegetables especially dark green ones (kale, broccoli, spinach)

The best way to make sure you have these nutrients is to add healthy foods to your diet. Taking a prenatal vitamin is not enough, they will only add to a healthy diet.

Tips for a healthy diet

- Not enough time? Plan and prepare your meals ahead of time and freeze them.
- Frozen fruits and vegetables are just as good as fresh ones.
- Substitute unhealthy snacks (chips, chocolate, cookies) for healthier foods (carrots, cucumber, granola bars, yogurt etc.)
- Avoid breaded, deep fried and fast foods. Choose non-breaded, boneless skinless meats. Don't forget about fish!
- Avoid high sugar drinks like Pepsi and juice. Substitute with water or diluted juice (1/4 juice, 3/4 water). Add lemon or juice ice cubes to water for something different.
- Eat frequent small healthy meals during the day as opposed to three big meals (remember breakfast!)
- Substitute white bread and white flour for whole grain bread and flour.
- Substitute high sugars cereal (fruit loops, lucky charms, chocolate cereal) for bran or whole grain cereals. Add fresh fruit for sweetness.
- Avoid too much caffeine. Substitute with herbal or caffeine free tea.
- Post Canada's food guide on your fridge to help remember healthy alternatives.