

Eating for two?



It is an old wives fable to say that a pregnant woman needs to 'eat for two'. It is important however, to have accurate information about what constitutes a healthy diet for pregnancy as unhealthy dietary habits lead to inappropriate weight gain which is a well known risk factor for gestational diabetes. Many women have concerns about putting on too much weight and this can lead to an inadequate food intake. The idea is to know what constitutes a healthy diet for you and for your baby.

One of the most important dietary factors is to continue to take folic acid even after the pregnancy is established. The overall kilojoule (kJ) content of your diet will also need to increase but only by about 300kJ per day (the equivalent of a slice of bread), in the first trimester, about 600kJ in the second trimester and around 900kJ in the third trimester. A lot of women find it easier to eat more frequent, smaller meals as nausea can be an issue in the first trimester, and feelings of 'fullness' and heartburn can cause problems after large meals later in the pregnancy.

While fish is quite nutritious and a good omega 3 food source, it can also contain high levels of heavy metals, particularly mercury. Food Standards Australia New Zealand now has recommendations that if you are pregnant or trying to become pregnant, it is best to consume large fish (eg. flake, swordfish or marlin), only once a fortnight. The basic rule is, the smaller the fish, the safer it is!

Some foods need to be avoided during pregnancy. They are:

- Raw seafood and fish (eg. sushi)
- Soft cheeses (eg. camembert, brie or blue veined cheese)
- Pate
- Raw or undercooked meat
- Undercooked eggs
- Liver and liver products

Try to eat a balanced diet including several servings of fruit and vegetables. Include lean meats, and unrefined carbohydrates. This will ensure good nutrition for you and your developing baby. It will also mean that you will feel more energized for longer periods throughout the day.

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