

Making healthy food choices for you and your baby

During pregnancy, it is extra important to take note of what you are fuelling your body with. This will help support you in your pregnancy and help your baby get all the vital vitamins and minerals it needs.

This leaflet has been designed to help you understand how to make healthy food choices to best support you and your baby.



You will want to eat a variety of foods during your pregnancy. The picture below shows the Eatwell guide from Public Health England. This is a great representation of what foods and what proportions your plate should be made up of.



Your meals should include:

- **At least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day.** These contain vital vitamins and minerals needed for a healthy pregnancy. This will also provide fibre to aid digestion and help prevent maternal constipation.
- **Starchy carbohydrates such as bread, pasta and rice for energy and fibre.** This will be highly beneficial during periods of fatigue experienced during the pre and postnatal period.
- **Protein such as meat, fish, eggs and pulses to provide amino acids which help your body and baby to grow.** This is especially important during the second and third trimester when there is a large amount of growth in your baby.
- **Foods rich in calcium such as dairy or non dairy alternatives like milks and cheeses for healthy bones and teeth in both you and your baby.**

For more information on the Eatwell plate, foods to avoid or include in your pregnancy please don't hesitate to ask me, your health professional or midwife. Alternatively, you can also visit the NHS choices website.

You will also want to include:

- 6-8 glasses of fluid per day (more if you are exercising) to keep you hydrated and help with any pregnancy constipation.
- A 400mcg folic acid supplement into your diet every day for at least the first 12 weeks of your pregnancy. This can help prevent neural tube defects such as spina bifida.
- You may also want to include a prenatal multivitamin as a daily supplement. These include the recommended Vitamin D & C, Iron and calcium which are vital for a healthy pregnancy. A regular multivitamin should however be avoided as these contain Vitamin A which can be harmful to an unborn baby. You should consult with your medical professional or pharmacist to find the best prenatal multivitamin for you.

Things to avoid during pregnancy:

- Soft cheese with a white rind such as brie and camembert or soft blue cheeses and blue veined cheese unless cooked. Also, raw, unpasteurised or non UHT dairy. These can contain harmful bacteria such as listeria which in rare cases can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth or severe illness for mother or newborn.
- Raw or partially cooked eggs. This is due to the risk of salmonella which can cause severe diarrhoea and sickness. This does not however apply to British Lion Code Eggs which are considered a very low risk of salmonella and therefore safe to eat raw or partially cooked.
- All pates including meat, fish and vegetable pates. These can also contain harmful bacteria such as listeria and should not be consumed due to risk to unborn child and risk of illness to mother or newborn.
- Raw or undercooked meat or processed meats. This may include salami and chorizo. There should be no trace of blood or pinkness when cooking meat due to risk of toxoplasmosis which can cause harm to an unborn baby.
- Liver and liver products. This may include haggis. These have high levels of Vitamin A which can be harmful to an unborn baby.
- Shark, swordfish and marlin. Limit tuna to 2 steaks or 4 medium tins a week. No more than 2 portions of oily fish such as salmon and mackerel a week. This is due to high levels of mercury which can cause developmental issues.
- All raw shellfish. These may contain harmful bacteria and lead to severe food poisoning. Raw fish in sushi is fine to eat if it has been frozen first.
- Avoid more than 200mg of caffeine per day. This is equivalent to 2 instant coffees per day. This can lead to having a low birth weight baby.
- Salt should be limited to no more than 6g a day.
- All alcohol. An unborn babies liver cannot process alcohol and so creates a risk to the unborn baby.
- Eating for two! Unfortunately, the comments of eating for two isn't actually true but you can eat 200 more calories during your third trimester and 500 more if you are breastfeeding. An average healthy maternal weight gain is 10-12.5kg so by eating healthy and continuing your exercise we can aim to stay within these ranges.

By following this guidance, we can help you achieve nutrition for a happy and healthy pregnancy!

For more information on the Eatwell plate, foods to avoid or include in your pregnancy please don't hesitate to ask me, your health professional or midwife. Alternatively, you can also visit the NHS choices website.