

# 10 Nutrition Tips for a Healthy Pregnancy

**REMEMBER:** Whatever you eat and drink, your baby eats and drinks, too.

1. Eat five to six small, well-balanced meals a day.
2. Make sure meat is cooked completely (well-done). Also, try to eat fresh meat that has to be cooked instead of deli meats which can contain pathogens.
3. Eat a large amount of fruits and vegetables. The nutrients in fruits and vegetables will help your baby's entire body develop and keep you healthy.
4. Avoid fish that are high in mercury. Mercury can harm a developing fetus's nervous system. Fish to avoid are: tilefish, swordfish, King Mackerel, shark, and albacore. Limit shrimp, crab, salmon, tilapia, light tuna, anchovies, and catfish to 12 ounces a week. Some fish are good to eat while pregnant, though. These fish contain Omega-3 fatty acids that are important for brain and heart health for both you and your baby. Salmon and trout are the best sources of Omega-3s. *If you do not like seafood or are afraid of eating any amount of seafood, you can get Omega-3 fatty acids in walnuts, flax seeds, and eggs, or you could take a supplement.*



5. Make sure to eat protein. Protein helps build cells. Protein can be found in lean meats, low mercury fish, beans, nuts, and seeds.
6. Eat whole grains. They contain folic acid which helps prevent neural tube birth defects. Folic acid can also be found in green, leafy vegetables, nuts, beans, and citrus fruits. Avoid white bread that provides no nutrients. *Check the food label ingredients list to make sure it says "whole wheat" or "whole grains."* Foods like rice, corn, oats, bran, and quinoa are also whole grains. Also, whole grains contain fiber to help the digestive system stay regular.
7. Take a prenatal vitamin each day as directed by your doctor or midwife that will help cover nutritional gaps in the diet.
8. Drink plenty of fluids, especially water. Avoid caffeine and drinks that contain artificial coloring. Limit caffeine consumption to less than 300 milligrams a day which is about two cups of regular coffee. Caffeine can cause dehydration which can trigger early labor and has been linked to miscarriage and low birth weight. Water prevents dehydration and delivers nutrients to all the cells in your body and your baby's body. Get enough calcium from dairy products or vitamins to help your baby's bones grow and to prevent you from losing bone density.
9. Don't smoke, and stay away from people who do smoke. Even secondhand smoke can harm your baby. If you need help quitting smoking, **call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for FREE help.**
10. Do not drink alcohol! Alcohol can cause birth defects. The defects alcohol causes is termed Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and includes low birth weight, mental retardation, small stature, learning disabilities, and emotional problems. **NO AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL IS SAFE.**

## EXTRA TIPS

- ✓ Exercise regularly. Exercise helps reduce stress and promotes general wellness for both you and your baby. Try to walk at least 15 to 20 minutes every day at a moderate pace. Walk in areas where there is shade or walk in a cool indoor environment. You could even sign up for a pregnancy exercise class.
- ✓ Make sure to get a good amount of sleep, at least 8 hours a night. **See your doctor if you are having any trouble sleeping.**
- ✓ Wear comfortable, non-restricting shoes. Your feet will probably start to ache and swell as your baby grows. Take rests and put your feet up several times a day to prevent swelling and pain.
- ✓ Do not take over-the-counter medications or herbal remedies without talking to your doctor or midwife.
- ✓ Wear a seat belt no matter what, and, if you can, sit in the back seat away from the airbags.