

# Your pregnancy

What to expect and what you can do



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# Making the most of your pregnancy visits

Pregnancy is an opportunity to learn more about your own health, your body and the health system.

Before you come for your pregnancy visit:

- make a list of questions or things you might want to talk about
- consider if you want someone to come with you like your partner, friend or family member.

If you want more information about recommended tests or treatment, don't be afraid to ask.

# Taking care of yourself and your baby

- Eat well and drink plenty of water.
- Regular gentle exercise – walking or swimming.
- Do not smoke.
- Do not drink alcohol.
- Don't 'do' drugs.
- Talk to your doctor about vaccinations, including the influenza vaccine in winter.
- Always wear a seatbelt in the car – the seatbelt should be positioned 'above the bump' and 'below the bump'.
- If you have money worries speak to Centrelink about benefits you can access.
- If you have a problem with family violence please refer to the phone numbers on your 'contact card'.

## Safe food preparation

- Wash your hands before preparing food and between handling raw and ready-to-eat foods.
- Keep stored food covered.
- Thoroughly wash fruit and raw vegetables before eating or juicing.
- Thoroughly cook all food of animal origin including meat, poultry and eggs.
- Keep hot foods hot (above 60°C).
- Reheat leftover food until steaming hot. Only buy ready-to-eat hot food if it's steaming hot.
- Store raw meat, raw poultry and raw fish on the lowest shelves in the refrigerator to prevent them dripping onto cooked food or ready to eat foods.
- Keep cold food cold (at or below 5°C) and keep your refrigerator clean.
- Place all cooked food in the refrigerator within an hour of cooking.
- Always follow use-by-dates on refrigerated foods.
- Do not handle cooked foods with the same utensils (tongs, knives, and cutting board) used on raw foods unless thoroughly washed in hot soapy water between uses.

## Safe food handling and storage

It is very important to be careful when preparing food.

You can reduce the risk of developing Listeria (bacteria found in soil) or other infections in food, such as gastroenteritis or toxoplasmosis (a parasite found in raw meat and cat faeces) by following some basic hygiene and food storage rules.

# Healthy eating

For detailed evidence-based up-to-date advice about serve sizes and kinds of foods to eat for health and wellbeing see *The Australian Dietary Guidelines*.

**More information:** [www.nhmrc.gov.au/\\_files\\_nhmrc/publications/attachments/n55h\\_healthy\\_eating\\_during\\_pregnancy.pdf](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/n55h_healthy_eating_during_pregnancy.pdf)

## Foods to avoid during pregnancy

### Do not eat



Pre-cooked meat products if eaten cold. Examples: pate, sliced deli meat, cooked diced chicken.



Soft cheeses. Examples: brie, camembert, ricotta, feta.



Uncooked, smoked or ready-to-eat seafood. Examples: smoked fish or mussels.



Soft serve ice-cream or soft serve frozen yoghurt.



Pre-prepared coleslaw and salads. Examples: salads from salad bars, delicatessens.



Unpasteurised milk or food made from raw milk, or raw eggs.

**More information:** [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/consumers/life-events-and-food/pregnancy/pregnancy-table/](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/consumers/life-events-and-food/pregnancy/pregnancy-table/)

# Healthy weight gain

You need to gain weight during pregnancy.

The amount of weight you should gain depends on how much you weighed before pregnancy.

There are risks being overweight during pregnancy.

Below is a guide to an ideal weight gain for each stage of your pregnancy based on your weight and height at your first hospital visit.

Stage of pregnancy	Underweight	Healthy weight range	Overweight	Obese
BMI ranges	Less than 18.5 kg/m	18.5-24.9 kg/m	25-29.9 kg/m	Higher than 30 kg/m
0-12 weeks	1-3 kg	1-3 kg	0-1 kg	0-1 kg
13-27 weeks	5-7 kg	5-6 kg	3-5 kg	2-4 kg
28 - 42 weeks	6-8 kg	5-6 kg	4-5 kg	3-4 kg
<b>Healthy total weight gain</b>	<b>12-18 kg</b>	<b>11-16 kg</b>	<b>7-11 kg</b>	<b>5-9 kg</b>

My ideal total weight gain target is \_\_\_\_\_

# Unhealthy weight gain

Pregnancy is a not a time for strict dieting, just sensible eating. If you are overweight you should not attempt a weight reduction diet during pregnancy.

To help **prevent excess weight gain**, take regular gentle exercise and cut down on high-fat and high-sugar, energy-dense foods and drinks.

## **Healthy eating suggestions:**

- eat fruit, salad, vegetables, low-fat yoghurt or dry biscuits as alternative snacks
- use low-fat dairy products such as yoghurt, milk and cheese
- trim all of the fat off your meat before cooking
- drink water or plain mineral or soda water
- avoid high-energy snack foods such as chocolate, lollies, cakes, health bars, biscuits, chips etc
- reduce the amount of fat (for example, margarine, butter or oil) you use in cooking and as a spread.

The amount of extra food you need is small.

## **Look after your teeth**

- Poor oral health in pregnant women can contribute to lower birth weight and premature births and increases the risk of early dental decay in children.
- Pregnancy hormones, morning sickness and some food cravings can increase your risk of having dental problems.
- Drink tap water every day.
- Brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste twice a day, morning and night.
- Use a soft toothbrush.
- Clean between your teeth with dental floss daily.
- If you have morning sickness DO NOT brush your teeth straight after vomiting - rinse your mouth with water first.

## **Medications**

Not all medicines are safe during pregnancy and breastfeeding. This includes medicine your doctor prescribes or you buy at the pharmacy or supermarket, including alternative medicines.

**Remember to check with your doctor or pharmacy before you take any medicines.**

## Do I need extra vitamins and minerals?

When you are pregnant your body needs more folate, iron, calcium, vitamin

	Recommended amount	Needed for
Folate	400 micrograms a day (start the month before pregnancy and continue for at least the first three months).	Healthy growth and development of your baby and substantially reduces the risk of neural tube defects (eg spina bifida).
Iron	Varies - generally sufficient with meat and a small amount in pregnancy multivitamins.	Making red blood cells for you and your baby.
Calcium	1000mg a day	The development of your baby's bones and teeth. Low calcium levels in pregnancy increases your risk of osteoporosis later in life.
Vitamin D	It is difficult to advise absolutely on amount of unprotected sunlight exposure. Must be balanced with cancer risks.	Essential for your body to absorb calcium.
Iodine	150 micrograms a day when pregnant, breastfeeding or considering pregnancy.	The normal mental development of the baby.
Omega 3 fatty acids	2-3 serves per week of (1 serve = 150g) fish.	Development of the baby's brain and nervous tissue.
Vitamin B12	Varies	Needed for cellular growth and nervous system development.

D and iodine.

Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A good simple supplement is a pregnancy multivitamin.</li><li>• Folate is found naturally in raw or lightly cooked green leafy vegetables, legumes (eg chick peas, lentils).</li><li>• Many processed foods now have folate as folic acid added (eg bread, breakfast cereals, orange juice).</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Best sources are lean red meat, chicken and fish.</li><li>• Other sources include: legumes (eg baked beans, kidney beans lentils and chickpeas), wholegrain breads and cereals, dark green leafy vegetables, iron fortified breakfast cereals, nuts and eggs.</li><li>• Iron is not as well absorbed from these foods as it is from meat.</li><li>• Iron is best absorbed if eaten with Vitamin C rich foods.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most calcium intake comes from dairy products.</li><li>• If you cannot eat dairy products look for calcium enriched food products in the supermarket.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sun exposure - the effect of sunlight on vitamin D levels varies with age, skin colour, sun intensity, time of day and time of year.</li><li>• Generally a fair skinned person needs to expose their hands, face and arms (or equivalent area) to sunlight for about 10 minutes a day in summer; in winter or if you have darker skin, around 15 minutes or more may be needed.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fish is the best food source.</li><li>• Some fish contains mercury that may harm an unborn baby. For safe selection of fish see <a href="http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/Documents/consumer_pdf/healthy_message_card.pdf">www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/_Documents/consumer_pdf/healthy_message_card.pdf</a></li><li>• Women with a pre-existing thyroid condition should seek advice from their doctor before taking supplements.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Oily fish such as salmon, sardines and tuna.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All animal products including milk and eggs.</li><li>• If you do not eat any animal products you will need a vitamin B12 supplement while pregnant and breastfeeding.</li></ul>

## Other products

Some other products that you should reduce during pregnancy:

- tea, coffee and cola soft drinks contain caffeine. Limit to three cups of coffee, tea or cola drinks.
- artificial sweeteners (like Nutrasweet™ or Equal™ and saccharin (like Sweet and Low™) are all safe in moderation
- hair dyes, perming solutions and hair removers are generally safe for occasional use following the instructions.

**Household cleaners, herbicides, paint and poisons are best avoided during pregnancy. Check with the Poisons Information Line 13 11 26 before use.**

## Coping with common discomforts during pregnancy

### Feeling sick and vomiting

- Remember it is more important to keep taking fluids than it is to have solid food.
- Eat a dry biscuit before you get up.
- Eat small meals and have frequent snacks.
- Try peppermint or ginger tea.
- Tell your midwife or doctor if vomiting is severe or constant.
- Some medications may be prescribed by your doctor if simple measures don't work.

### Food cravings/dislikes

- Increased sensitivity to strong smelling food and craving certain foods is common.

## **Tiredness/difficulty sleeping**

- Rest whenever you can.
- Ask for help at work and home.
- Avoid stimulants such as tea, coffee, cola or alcohol.
- Do something relaxing before going to bed.
- Doing regular exercise may help.

## **Heartburn**

- Avoid foods that trigger indigestion (such as fatty, spicy foods or acidic foods).
- Avoid coffee, chocolate, coca cola and alcohol.
- Don't eat close to bedtime.
- Do eat small amounts of food frequently.
- Take fluids between meals or before you eat.
- Use more pillows under your head and shoulders when you sleep.
- Antacids may help if simple measures don't work.

## **Constipation**

- Drink plenty of water each day.
- Do some regular exercise.
- Eat high fibre foods - fruit and vegetables, breakfast cereals, wholemeal bread, lentils and beans.
- If these measures don't work, speak to your doctor, midwife or chemist about a safe treatment option.

## **Haemorrhoids**

- Avoid constipation.
- Lie down to rest when you can. Try not to stand for long periods.

## **Varicose veins**

- Wear support stockings.
- Lie down to rest when you can. Try not to stand for too long at a time.

## **Leg cramps**

- Leg cramps are suffered by about 50% of pregnant women in the later months. They occur mainly at night.
- Massage and stretch the affected muscles during a cramp.

## **Back and stretching ligament pain**

- As your baby grows and your uterus takes up more space there's even more pressure on your lower back, pelvic bones, bladder and other organs.
- Regular gentle exercise (walking, swimming, and cycling) can be helpful.
- Posture is important. Stand tall. Wear shoes with low heels.
- In the later months lie down to rest when you can.
- Application of heat (gel pack) may be helpful.

## **Urinary frequency (needing to pass urine often)**

- While common in early pregnancy as your uterus and baby grow bigger in size and press on your bladder, this could be a sign of infection especially if associated with burning discomfort.
- Continue to drink plenty of water.

## **Vaginal discharge**

- It is not uncommon to have an increase in mucous, especially in the later months.
- The discharge shouldn't be irritating, itchy or smell. These signs may indicate infection such as candida (thrush).

## **Vaginal candida infection (thrush)**

- The recommended treatment for a vaginal thrush infection is a cream or pessary containing imidazole (an antifungal drug). The cream or pessary is inserted into the vagina (follow the instructions that come with the drug).
- Wear loose, cotton underpants for comfort.

## How am I feeling?

Pregnancy is a big change in your life. You start to look different and become tired more easily.

You may be concerned about the changes that will take place when your baby arrives; taking time off from work, your finances and changes to your lifestyle.

With any change it is normal to experience a range of emotions - excitement, joy, relief, fear, anxiety and stress may be some of the emotions you feel at different times.

It is important that you discuss how you are feeling with your partner, and/or friends and family. This may help them to feel more involved or assist them to give you support when you need it.

Sometimes it can be difficult to know whether you are feeling a little run down or stressed, or whether you have symptoms of depression or anxiety.

There are many physical, hormonal and biological factors that can make women more likely to experience depression and anxiety during pregnancy and during your baby's first year.

**We encourage you to talk to your support people, your midwife or doctor, or to contact services such as Beyond Blue if you would like more information or support.**  
[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)



# Some things that you may like to think about during pregnancy

- Do I know my maternity leave entitlements and have I discussed these with my employer?
- Do I know where to go if I need help with money, food, housing, and family violence issues?
- Do I have someone I can talk to if I'm worried or depressed?

## Travel

- Travelling is safe during pregnancy.
- When travelling on a plane drink plenty of water and move and stretch your legs regularly.
- Make sure you take insurance for pregnancy care in the countries you are visiting.
- Individual airlines have policies on pregnancy and travel.

## Having sex

- There is no reason not to have sex during pregnancy
- If you have spotting after sex, it is normal, but let your doctor or midwife know.
- Sex may not be that easy later in pregnancy or you might lose interest, so you and your partner might want to try different positions.

## X-rays

If you need an x-ray during pregnancy let the staff caring for you know that you are pregnant so that they can minimise exposure to your baby.



## Ambulance membership

Consider taking out an Ambulance Victoria annual membership. This may save you considerable costs if you or your baby do need emergency transport.

## Going past my due date?

Only 5% of babies are born on the 'due date'. Most babies are born between 40-41 weeks.

From 37 weeks your baby is ready to be born. He/she is able to breathe, suck and swallow without help. Your baby is now about 50 centimetres long and weighs about 3600 grams.

It is important to continue to keep a check on your baby's movements. Babies do not move less as your pregnancy increases.

After your due date, you may be asked to have baby's heart rate monitored and an ultrasound to check the amniotic fluid level to check on your baby's wellbeing.

### **Signs and symptoms to take seriously:**

Some pregnancy complications may need treatment or admission to hospital.

If you are worried about yourself or your baby talk to the staff caring for you. If you have any of the following talk to the staff caring for you as soon as possible or call the hospital.

- Fever
- Severe nausea and repeated vomiting
- Pain or burning when you pass urine
- Any pain that does not go away
- Baby moves less than usual
- Bleeding from your vagina
- Painful contractions
- 'Waters break' (leaking fluid)
- Severe headache that does not go away
- Sudden blurred vision
- Sudden swelling of face, ankles and fingers

