

Prenatal Health and your Baby



If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, Canada's Food Guide lists a variety of foods that offer benefit and balance to you and your growing baby. Essential nutrients to consider are:



Folic acid (also known as folate)

Role/Benefits: Folic acid during pregnancy is necessary for the development of your baby's spinal cord and brain. In addition to naturally occurring folic acid found in food, health care professionals recommend all women trying to conceive, pregnant or breastfeeding, take a multi-vitamin containing 0.4 g of folic acid every day.

Some Sources of Folic Acid

Green vegetables
Dried peas, beans and lentils
Folic acid fortified bread, cereals or pasta
Orange juice
Nuts and seeds



Protein

Role/Benefits: Protein intake during pregnancy is important. Proteins are the building blocks of your baby's cells and your placenta. During the second trimester, protein demand increases by 40-50% (about 71g) daily.

Some Sources of Protein

Meat
Fish
Legumes (dried peas, beans, lentils, chickpeas, etc.)
Poultry



Canada's 2019 Food Guide recommends choosing protein from a variety of sources, including plant-based proteins. Plant-based protein can provide more fibre and less saturated fat than traditional types of protein sources.



Iron

Roles/Benefits: Iron intake during pregnancy is critical. Your body produces more red blood cells to supply oxygen and nutrients to your developing baby and to support your baby's brain growth and development. In the 3rd trimester, your baby will be stocking up their iron stores to make sure there's enough for the first months of life.

Some Sources of Iron

Meat
Fish
Iron-fortified pasta
Nuts and Seeds
Eggs
Dried Beans



When choosing non-meat sources of iron, serve them alongside vitamin C-rich foods to enhance iron absorption.



Calcium

Roles/Benefits: Calcium intake during pregnancy is essential for your developing baby to build strong bones and teeth and help protect your bone mass. Eating calcium-rich foods ensures your baby continues to grow stronger every day. If your calcium intake is low, your body will take calcium from your bones and teeth to give it to your little one. Make sure you are getting enough for the both of you.

Some Sources of Calcium

Milk
Cheese
Yogurt
Sardines or salmon with bones





Vitamin D

Role/Benefits: Vitamin D during pregnancy is important for maintaining and building strong bones for both you and your baby. It also enhances the absorption of calcium.

Vitamin D needs do not change during pregnancy. Be sure to include two (2) servings of milk or fortified soy-based beverage (or other fortified beverages) to meet your vitamin D needs.

Some Sources of Vitamin D

Vitamin D-fortified milk
Yogurt
Fatty fish (e.g. salmon, sardines, mackerel, etc.), and fish oils



Omega-3 fats

Role/Benefits: During pregnancy, omega-3 fatty acids, such as DHA are transferred across the placenta and have an essential role in the healthy physical development of the baby's brain and eyes such as fish, seafood and omega-3-enriched foods, such as milk and eggs. Some plant sources of omega-3 fats are nuts, seeds and soy. Although these do not provide DHA, they still are known to be heart-healthy.

Some Sources of Omega-3

Fatty fish (salmon, sardines, mackerel, anchovies, etc.)
Walnuts
Ground flax seeds
(pro tip: add flax seeds and flaxseed oil to your smoothies!)



Vitamin C

Role/Benefits: Vitamin C promotes healthy gums and helps your body absorb iron. Reach for fruits and vegetables to get your vitamin C.

Some Sources of Vitamin C

Guava
Oranges
Red and yellow peppers



Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate!

Water is your best friend during pregnancy! It is SO important that you hydrate. Early in pregnancy, fluid needs will increase to support your changing body and developing baby. Drinking enough fluids helps fight fatigue and even helps with constipation.

Key takeaways on prenatal nutrition

- Eat according to Canada's Food Guide.
- Take a daily multi-vitamin that has 0.4 mg of folic acid and 16-20 mg of iron.
- Include an extra 2 to 3 of Canada's Food Guide servings each day. For example, add a fruit and yogurt for a mid-day snack.
- Be active every day as part of a healthy pregnancy. Talk to your health care provider about pregnancy approved exercises and how to increase your activity level.
- Consider adding a nutritional beverage to your diet when pregnant or breastfeeding. When you breastfeed your baby, your body requires more calories each day. Similac Mom® is a product that will complement your healthy diet, packed with protein, vitamin D, folic acid, iron, and calcium – all of the essential nutrients we talked about in this article!

