Nutrition for
Pregnancy and
Breastfeeding
Contents

1 Being healthy before pregnancy
  1 How important is what I eat?
  1 Why is folate needed before pregnancy?

2 Healthy eating during pregnancy
  2 How much food do I need to eat?
  2 Which foods do I need to eat?
  4 Grain (cereal) foods
  4 Vegetables and legumes/beans
  5 Fruit
  5 Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives
  7 Lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans
  8 ...a little more about iron
  9 What should I eat for the day?

10 Common questions during pregnancy
  10 How much weight should I gain?
  11 What foods should I avoid?
  11 Take some simple food hygiene steps to reduce the risk of Listeriosis
  12 Listeria – High risk foods and safer choices
  13 What do I need to know about mercury in fish?
  13 Is there anything I can do to lower the risk of allergies in my baby?
  14 Are fish oils important in pregnancy?
  14 What about iodine?
  15 Do I need to take a vitamin and mineral supplement?
  15 What if I am a vegetarian?
  16 Are cravings okay?
  16 Can I drink alcohol while I’m pregnant?
Common questions during pregnancy cont...

17 Are herbal teas safe?
17 How much caffeine can I have?
17 What about artificial sweeteners?
18 If I am having twins or triplets, do I have to eat more food?
18 What should I do if I have morning sickness?
19 Tips to help deal with morning sickness
20 How can I treat constipation?
21 Why am I having indigestion and heart burn?

22 Healthy eating and breastfeeding
22 Is nutrition important when I am breastfeeding?
22 How much extra energy (calories/kilojoules) do I need?
23 Where do I get extra protein from?
23 What about calcium?
23 What about iodine?
23 Do I need extra drinks when breastfeeding?
24 How do I increase my supply of breastmilk?
24 Is it okay to lose weight while I am breastfeeding?
24 Should I avoid certain foods?
25 Are tea, coffee and cola drinks OK?
25 What about alcohol?

26 Good nutrition for life
There is never a better time to start improving your eating habits than when you are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding. Good nutrition is important for your baby, even before conception.

Being healthy before pregnancy

How important is what I eat?
Aim to lead a healthy lifestyle before becoming pregnant. This includes being active and maintaining or working towards a healthy weight.

It is best that you have a healthy, nutritious diet before becoming pregnant. This will help your nutrient stores to be ‘topped up’. You should try to include a wide variety of food from each of the food groups daily.

Why is folate needed before pregnancy?
Folate, also known as folic acid, is one of the vitamins needed by everyone for good health. It is found in most plant foods especially green vegetables, wholegrain breads and cereals, dried beans and nuts. Some foods such as bread, breakfast cereals and juices may have folate added to them.

Taking extra folate in the form of folic acid tablets in the very early stages of pregnancy can reduce the chance of having a baby with a neural tube defect. Spina bifida is the most common neural tube defect. This defect occurs when the spinal cord and brain are forming. This can happen before you know you are pregnant.

In 2009, it became a legal requirement in Australia that all bread-making flour, except organic flour, contain added folate. Therefore, three slices of bread (100g) now contains an average of 120 micrograms of folate. The Australian Government has put folate in bread-making flour to help women protect their babies against neural tube defects.

However, even if you eat foods with added folate and naturally rich in folate, it is difficult to get the extra folate needed during early pregnancy. So although it is worthwhile increasing the folate in your diet, the best way to guarantee you get enough is to ‘top up’ with a folic acid tablet. You can do this by taking a 0.5 milligrams (mg) folic acid tablet, for at least one month before pregnancy and the first three months of pregnancy. Folic acid tablets are not expensive and are available from your local pharmacy without a prescription. If you are taking a pregnancy multivitamin it will already have folic acid in it, therefore you do not need to take a folate supplement as well.

Some women may be at a higher risk of having a baby with a neural tube defect and will be recommended a higher dose of folate. Check with your doctor if you are uncertain.
Healthy eating during pregnancy

How much food do I need to eat?
When you are pregnant you do not need to ‘eat for two’! The quality of your diet is much more important than the quantity of food that you eat. In fact, when you are pregnant your need for energy (calories/kilojoules) is only slightly higher than normal. Calcium, iron, protein and folate are examples of nutrients which are extra important during pregnancy.

Which foods do I need to eat?
It is important for women who are pregnant to eat a balanced diet. This will help your baby to grow strong and healthy, and meet your own nutritional needs also.

You can use The Australian Guide to Healthy Eating (see page 3) to help you understand what foods you need. As shown in the diagram, foods are divided into five groups:

1. Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high fibre varieties including bread, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles
2. Vegetables, and legumes/beans
3. Fruit
4. Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or their alternatives, mostly reduced fat
5. Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans

Each food group provides different nutrients. Try to choose a variety of foods from each of the food groups.

Some foods do not fit into the five food groups. These are not essential for your body. These ‘extra’ foods, pictured outside the five food groups (bottom right corner) should be chosen only sometimes and in small amounts.

As a general rule:
> Base your diet around breads and cereals, vegetables and fruit.
> Include moderate amounts of animal foods (milk, yoghurt, meat, fish, poultry, eggs).
> Variety is vital! Within each group, different foods provide more of some nutrients than others. Eat a variety of foods from within each group.
> ‘Extra foods’ – choose these sometimes and in small amounts.
> Drink plenty of water.
Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five food groups every day.
Drink plenty of water.

Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high cereal fibre varieties

Vegetables and legumes/beans

Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans

Fruit

Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives, mostly reduced fat

Use small amounts

Only sometimes and in small amounts
Grain (cereal) foods

The grain (cereal) group includes foods like bread, breakfast cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, polenta, couscous, bulgur, oats, quinoa and barley. This group provides carbohydrates, protein, fibre and lots of vitamins and minerals. Wholemeal and wholegrain types provide more nutrients, including fibre. If you are feeling hungry eat more of these foods as a healthy way to feel fuller.

Hints

Try to eat different types of:

> breads e.g. brown, mixed grain, fruit, rye or flat breads.
> grains e.g. add pearl barley to soups, try white or brown rice, pasta, Asian noodles, rice, couscous, quinoa or polenta.
> cereals e.g. try ready to eat breakfast cereals with different grains, whole wheat breakfast biscuits, (e.g. WeetBix™), natural muesli, bran flakes or porridge.

Limit the amount of high fat spreads and toppings and sauces you use on bread and pasta dishes.

Vegetables and legumes/beans

These are a good source of vitamins (e.g. folate) and minerals, as well as fibre and carbohydrate. Have lots of these! Try lots of different coloured vegetables (i.e. orange, green, yellow and red) as they provide different vitamins.

Hints

> Enjoy washed, raw salad vegetables such as lettuce, tomato, cucumber and capsicum.
> Try adding legumes (dried peas, beans, lentils and chick peas) to soups or casserole dishes.
> Frozen or canned vegetables can be used instead of fresh vegetables.
> Vegetable based soups make a healthy and easy meal.
Fruit

Fruit is a good source of vitamins, including folate and vitamin C. It also provides carbohydrate (natural sugars) and fibre. We are lucky to have lots of fresh fruit available in Australia. Fruit makes a great snack food. Tinned fruits (in natural juice) are also quick and easy.

Hints

> Buy fruit that is in season as it will be cheaper.
> Tinned Fruits (apple, apricots, pears) are a healthy snack.
> Fruit juice and dried fruit also belong in this group, limit these to small amounts occasionally.

Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives

Dairy foods such as milk, yoghurt and cheese are excellent sources of calcium. They also contain protein, riboflavin and vitamin B12.

CALCIUM is needed during pregnancy to help your baby build strong, healthy bones and teeth. It also helps to keep your bones strong.

You should aim to include around 3 serves of dairy foods each day. This is even more important if you are under 18 years of age as your bones are still strengthening, aim to include at least 3–4 serves daily.
The following foods contain about the same amount of calcium as a serve of milk, youghurt or cheese:

> 100g almonds with skin
> 60g sardines, canned in water
> 100g canned pink salmon with bones
> 100g firm tofu (check the nutrition panel on the label as calcium levels vary)

**Hints**

> Choose low fat milk (e.g. skim milk such as Tone™ or UHT skim, reduced fat such as Take Care™ or Light Start™)
> Choose low fat yoghurts (e.g. natural yoghurt, Yoplait Light™, Ski D’Lite™)
> High calcium milks may be useful if your dairy intake is low (e.g. Pura Boost™).
> If using soy milk, make sure it has calcium added by looking for calcium in the ingredient list (e.g. So Good™, Australia’s Own Natural Soy Milk™). The nutrition panel on the label should show at least 100mg Calcium per 100ml of milk.
> If you don’t like drinking plain milk try using milk on breakfast cereals, in mornays, custards and other milk based desserts or try adding cheese to your food such as omelettes, pasta or vegetable dishes.
> Flavour milk with products such as Milo™, Actavite™.
> Try eating yoghurt or cheese for a snack or for dessert.
> Fish with edible bones (sardines or salmon), green vegetables, wholegrain breads and cereals, nuts and seeds also contain calcium. If it is difficult for you to get enough calcium from your diet you may need to take a calcium supplement. Discuss this with your doctor, midwife or dietitian.

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**One serve equals:**

> 1 cup (250 ml) milk – fresh, UHT long life, reconstituted powdered milk or buttermilk
> 2 slices (40 grams) cheese
> 1 cup (250 ml) calcium fortified soy milk e.g. So Good
> 150 ml high calcium milk e.g. Pura Boost, Anlene
> ¾ cup/200 gram tub yoghurt
Lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans

The foods in this group are a good source of iron, protein, niacin and vitamin B12. Red meat is the best source of iron.

A little extra protein is needed particularly in the second half of pregnancy. Most of us eat more protein than we need. A small to medium serve of protein at lunch and dinner every day will easily meet your needs.

Hints

> Try different meats and fish including beef, lamb, pork, kangaroo, chicken, turkey, duck, rabbit, fish and shellfish. Approximately 65–100g is a good serving size.
> Eat red meat 3–4 times a week.
> Canned fish can be used instead of fresh fish.
> Choose lean meats (e.g. trimmed meat, lean mince) and cook without adding lots of fat (e.g. oils, butter, margarine). Use low fat cooking methods such as grilling, braising (e.g. casseroles) and microwaving.

For a guide on eating fish in pregnancy see page 13.
...a little more about iron

Extra iron is needed when you are pregnant. Iron is needed for making blood and carrying oxygen around the body. During pregnancy you have more blood in your body for you and the baby, so you need more iron. If you don’t eat enough iron you may become anaemic. This may make you feel very tired and worn out.

> The best source of iron in the diet is lean red meat followed by pork, chicken and fish.

> Plant sources of iron include wholemeal and wholegrain breads and cereals, beans and green leafy vegetables.

> The iron in animal foods (meat, chicken, and fish) is more easily absorbed by your body than iron in plant foods.

> Eating foods high in vitamin C (e.g. oranges, rockmelon, tomatoes, capsicum) will help your body to absorb more iron from plant foods (e.g. a small glass of orange juice with wholegrain breakfast cereal or tomato with a wholemeal sandwich).

> Sometimes women who are pregnant will need to take an iron supplement to keep their blood iron levels up. Supplements are also worthwhile if you cannot eat enough high iron foods in your diet. Discuss this with your doctor, midwife or dietitian.
What should I eat for the day?

This meal plan provides some ideas to help you include foods from each of the 5 food groups. The quantities you eat depends on your appetite and exercise level. Enjoy water throughout the day.

**Breakfast:**
- Wholegrain cereal (e.g. Weet-Bix™, Sultana Bran™) with low fat milk
- Toast with a thin spread of margarine + topping.
- Fresh fruit or tinned fruit in natural juice.

**Lunch:**
- Sandwich/roll (wholegrain or wholemeal is best) with a thin spread of margarine and freshly cooked meat, cheese, egg or canned salmon and salad.
- Fresh fruit.
- Low fat yoghurt/fromage frais or a milk drink (e.g. flavoured milk, fruit smoothie)

**Dinner:**
- Lean meat, oily fish, chicken or bean dish with potato, pasta, rice, couscous or noodles.
- or pasta with bolognese or vegetable sauce
- or homemade pizza using pitta bread, fresh vegetables and grated cheese.
- Remember to include salad or vegetables with your meal.

**Snacks between meals:**
- Nuts
- Custard or low fat yoghurt
- Fruit (fresh or tinned)
- Vegetables (fresh, washed salad vegetables such as carrot and celery sticks, snow peas and capsicum with a low fat dip (e.g. Tzatziki, Hommus)
- Low fat milk drinks (e.g. berries or tinned fruit blended with low fat milk)
- Wholegrain biscuits (e.g. Vita-Weat™, wholemeal Salada™) with low fat cheese or dip.

Remember, regular meals are an important part of a healthy diet. Try not to skip meals.
Common questions during pregnancy

How much weight should I gain?

It may be harder to get pregnant if you are very underweight or overweight. If this is a problem discuss it with your doctor, midwife or dietitian. If you are overweight, pregnancy is not a safe time for trying to lose weight. It is best to tackle this either before the pregnancy or as a long term goal after your baby is born.

Weight gain is a normal part of a healthy pregnancy. How much weight you gain depends on several things, including your pre-pregnancy weight. Most women can expect to gain between 11.5–16 kg. Those who start under-weight may gain more, those over-weight may gain less.

The following table shows a guide to your ideal weight gain in the second and third trimesters. Only a little weight is put on in the first trimester (usually around 0.5 to 2 kg).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-pregnancy weight</th>
<th>Ideal weight gain during pregnancy (kg)</th>
<th>*Recommended rate (kg per week)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underweight</td>
<td>12.5–18 kg</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy weight</td>
<td>11.5–16 kg</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>7–11.5 kg</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obese</td>
<td>5–9 kg</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twin Pregnancy#</td>
<td>17–25 kg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 2nd and 3rd trimesters
# Talk to your doctor, midwife or dietitian if you are overweight or obese (see page 18).

The weight you gain is made up of extra body tissue, placenta, fluid and blood as well as your developing baby. Remember that weight gain is part of a healthy pregnancy so take care not to overly restrict it.

If your weight gain is in the healthy range you can expect to return to your pre-pregnancy weight after your baby is born. Breastfeeding is a great way to help this happen. You will use up more energy breastfeeding than at any time during your pregnancy.
What foods should I avoid?

Listeriosis is a rare but serious illness caused by a germ called Listeria. This germ can be passed on by contaminated food or poor food hygiene. Listeriosis causes few or no symptoms to the mother, however, the infection may be transferred to your baby and can lead to miscarriage, still birth, premature birth or may make a newborn baby very ill.

If you have any concerns about symptoms or illness please consult your doctor.

You can reduce the risk of Listeriosis by taking simple food hygiene steps at home, avoiding certain high risk foods and being careful about food prepared by others.

Avoid high risk foods; these are mostly chilled, ready to eat foods. The table on page 12 indicates which foods are high risk and gives safer choices.

Take some simple food hygiene steps to reduce the risk of Listeriosis

- Make sure ready to eat hot food is served steaming hot.
- Eat only freshly cooked food however if leftovers are stored promptly they can be eaten within a day. Cover and cool food in the fridge, not on the bench top.
- When you reheat food, make sure it is steaming hot throughout.
- Thoroughly cook raw food from animal sources (e.g. beef, pork, poultry).
- Thoroughly wash raw fruit and vegetables before eating.
- Store uncooked meats separate from vegetables, cooked foods and ready-to eat foods.
- Store uncooked meats below other foods so there is no chance it will drip onto other foods.
- Always thaw ready-to-eat frozen food in the fridge or microwave – don’t thaw at room temperature.
- Keep hot food hot (above 60°C) and cold foods cold (at or below 5°C).
- Wash and dry your hands before preparing food.
- Wash hands, knives and cutting boards after handling uncooked foods to avoid contaminating cooked and ready to eat foods.
- Avoid foods past their ‘best before’ date or ‘use by’ date.

For more information visit www.foodstandards.gov.au.
## Listeria – High risk foods and safer choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food type example</th>
<th>Foods to avoid</th>
<th>Safer choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cold meats</strong></td>
<td>Sliced processed meats (e.g. ham, salami).</td>
<td>Home cooked meat stored in the fridge and eaten the next day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cold cooked chicken</strong></td>
<td>Take away cooked diced chicken (as used in chicken sandwiches).</td>
<td>Home cooked chicken stored in the fridge and eaten the next day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pate</strong></td>
<td>Refrigerated pate or meat spreads.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salads (fruit and vegetables)</strong></td>
<td>Pre-prepared salads and/or ready-to-eat food from supermarkets, smorgasboards, delicatessens and sandwich/sushi bars.</td>
<td>Freshly made salads with well washed vegetables. Washed whole fruit or freshly made fruit salad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chilled seafood</strong></td>
<td>Raw seafood such as oysters and sashimi. Ready to eat peeled prawns. Smoked seafood such as smoked salmon, smoked oysters.</td>
<td>Well cooked seafood including shellfish. Canned oysters, canned salmon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cheese</strong></td>
<td>Soft cheese such as Brie, Camembert, Ricotta, Feta and Blue Cheese.</td>
<td>Soft cheese cooked in dishes and served hot e.g. ricotta cannelloni, baked feta. Hard cheeses. Cottage cheese, cream cheese (look for intact packaging and use within 4 days of opening).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ice cream</strong></td>
<td>Soft serve. Traditional ice-cream containing raw egg yolk.</td>
<td>Regular ice-cream or sorbets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other dairy products</strong></td>
<td>Unpasteurised milk or food made from unpasteurised milk e.g. raw goats milk.</td>
<td>Pasteurised milk.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What do I need to know about mercury in fish?

It is recommended you eat fish as part of a healthy diet during pregnancy. Fish offers many benefits to both yourself and the growth and development of your baby, like protein and fatty acids. However, deep fried fish is high in fat and should be eaten only sometimes and in small amounts.

Mercury, a naturally occurring heavy metal found in our environment, can build up in some types of fish. Pregnant women need to be careful of the types and amounts of fish they eat as their baby is more at risk to the effects of mercury. Following these guidelines will ensure that you and your baby do not get too much mercury.

If you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, you can eat up to:

- 2–3 serves of any fish or seafood per week not listed below, or
- 1 serve of sea perch/orange roughly or catfish per week and no other fish consumed that week, or
- 1 serve per fortnight of shark (flake) or swordfish/ broadbill/ marlin and no other fish consumed that fortnight.

**Note:** 1 serve of fish = 150 g portion

Canned tuna generally has lower levels of mercury than other tuna. It is therefore safe for all population groups to consume a small can of tuna (95 grams) everyday, assuming no other fish is eaten. Canned salmon or sardines are also good alternatives. But remember, the Australian Dietary Guidelines recommends that a variety of foods be eaten.

Fish oil supplements are not a major source of dietary mercury and there is no recommendation to restrict intake of these products on the basis of mercury content.


Is there anything I can do to lower the risk of allergies in my baby?

There is no conclusive evidence that changes to a mother’s diet while pregnant will reduce the chance of her baby developing a food allergy. This is an area of ongoing research.
Are fish oils important in pregnancy?
Research is currently underway to investigate whether extra omega-3 fatty acids during pregnancy will benefit an infant/child’s development. You can find these omega-3 fatty acids in oily fish such as mackerel, herrings, sardines, salmon and tuna and other seafood. Try to include an oily fish meal twice each week.

What about iodine?
Iodine is important for the normal development of your baby during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Studies have found there is a mild to moderate iodine deficiency in Australia. In 2009, it became a legal requirement in Australia that all salt used to make bread, except organic bread, be replaced with iodised salt. The Australian Government has used iodised salt in bread to help Australians get more iodine in their diet.

Extra iodine is needed in pregnancy, and it can be quite difficult to get enough iodine through food alone. Good food sources of iodine include bread, dairy foods, eggs, iodised salt, canned salmon and seaweed. If you are not consuming bread, fish and 3 serves of dairy most days it is unlikely you are getting enough iodine.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) have released a recommendation that all women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or considering pregnancy take an iodine supplement of 150µg each day. Women with pre-existing thyroid conditions should seek advice from their doctor prior to taking an iodine supplement. Speak to your doctor about taking an iodine supplement if you are concerned.

Note: Many pregnancy multivitamin and mineral supplements contain iodine. Avoid using kelp (seaweed) supplements or kelp based products because they contain varying levels of iodine and may be contaminated with heavy metals such as mercury.
Do I need to take a vitamin and mineral supplement?

All women planning a pregnancy, and for the first three months of pregnancy should take a folic acid supplement (see page 1 for more information). The NHMRC also recommends most women take an iodine supplement when considering pregnancy, during pregnancy and breastfeeding (see page 14).

For the other vitamins and minerals if you eat a healthy diet from the 5 food groups, this should provide all the nutrients you need.

Some women want to take a multivitamin and mineral supplement if they are not sure they are getting all the nutrients they need. If you choose to take a multivitamin and mineral supplement, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or dietitian. General multivitamin supplements or herbal supplements may not be appropriate, a pregnancy specific supplement is best. Pregnancy supplements should include at least the recommended amounts of folic acid and iodine, so additional supplements of these are not usually needed.

Note: Some women with additional medical needs may also be advised by their doctor or midwife to take a Vitamin D supplement during pregnancy and breastfeeding, or need iron or calcium supplements during pregnancy.

For more details call the Medicines and Drug Information Centre at the Women's and Children's Hospital on (08) 8161 7222.

What if I am a vegetarian?

When someone says they are a ‘vegetarian’ it can mean a number of different things.

‘Lacto-ovo vegetarians’ avoid meat, fish and chicken, but include eggs and dairy products such as milk, cheese and yoghurt. ‘Vegan vegetarians’ avoid all food from animals including meat, milk and eggs.

> If you are vegetarian make sure you choose a variety of protein foods such as dairy foods, legumes, cereals/ grains and nuts/ seeds.

> If you choose to follow a vegan diet you should take extra care to include a variety of protein foods over the day. Some ideas are:
  - Pasta with a lentil sauce
  - Falafel – legumes and tahini
  - Baked beans on toast
  - Peanut butter on wholegrain bread
  - Soy drinks with added calcium are very useful for vegans to help meet their requirements for calcium.
Vegetarian sources of iron include wholegrain breads and cereals, legumes and nuts, green leafy vegetables and eggs. Eating or drinking a vitamin C rich food e.g. fruit or juice at the same meal will help the absorption of iron from these foods. Cheese should not be used as a regular meat replacement as it is low in iron. For both lacto-ovo and vegan vegetarians, it can be very difficult to meet your iron needs in pregnancy, and an iron supplement may be needed.

A strict vegan diet can be low in vitamin B12 and some fatty acids. Vitamin B12 and fats are important for the normal development of the brain, eyes, spinal cord and nervous system of your baby. If you are a vegan vegetarian and pregnant or breastfeeding you should look to include foods fortified with vitamin B12 and fatty acids, take a supplement, or consider including some milk, egg or fish in your diet during this time.

Whether you are vegetarian or vegan, you should ensure you are getting enough energy from your food to meet the extra demands of pregnancy. A good way to check this is to make sure you are gaining enough weight.

Vegetarians who are pregnant may benefit from seeing a dietitian to ensure they are getting enough iron, zinc, calcium, vitamin B12, fats and good quality protein to meet their needs.

Are cravings okay?

It is common to have cravings for certain foods during pregnancy. Try not to let these cravings stop you from eating a good variety of healthy foods. Cravings don’t indicate that you are not eating enough of a certain food or nutrient.

Can I drink alcohol while I’m pregnant?

If you are pregnant or planning to get pregnant, no alcohol at all is the safest choice. There is no safe time to drink during pregnancy as alcohol can harm your baby for life. When you drink alcohol so does your baby. The alcohol will reach your unborn baby very quickly and its blood alcohol will be the same level as yours.

For women in South Australia seeking support to stop drinking contact the Alcohol and Drug Information Service (24 hour counselling) 1300 13 13 40.
Are herbal teas safe?
Herbal teas and other herbal preparations are not recommended as most have not been tested to determine their safety during pregnancy and breastfeeding. There are no standards as to how herbal teas are made and what they contain. Fruit teas from the supermarket are ok.

How much caffeine can I have?
Tea, coffee and cola drinks contain caffeine. Large amounts of caffeine can increase the risk of miscarriage or having a baby with a low birthweight. It is best to drink no more than:

- 1 cup (250ml) of espresso coffee, or
- 3 cups of instant style coffee, or
- 4 cups of tea, or
- 4 cans (375ml) cola drinks per day.

Energy drinks are not recommended during pregnancy as they may contain high levels of caffeine.

What about artificial sweeteners?
Artificial sweeteners are not necessary in a balanced diet. However, if you choose to use them, Food Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) state all artificial sweeteners available on the Australian market are safe for use during pregnancy.
If I am having twins or triplets, do I have to eat more food?

If you are pregnant with twins or triplets, you need more nutrition than mothers having a single baby. The quality of your diet is even more important to make sure you meet the needs of both yourself and your babies. Work on including more of the foods that boost your protein, iron, calcium and folate intake.

**Some important points:**

> Try to have 4 serves of dairy foods each day, or consider a calcium supplement if your dairy intake is low.

> Have a serve of protein food (meat, chicken, fish, eggs, cheese, nuts or legumes) at each main meal.

> Choose nutrient-rich foods like wholegrain breads and cereals, fruit, nuts, seeds as snacks.

> A pregnancy multivitamin and mineral supplement may be useful. Many women pregnant with twins may also be advised to take separate iron and folic acid supplements throughout pregnancy – talk to your doctor about what dose you need.

> It is normal to gain more weight than women having one baby - i.e. 17-25kg for women starting pregnancy in the healthy weight range.

> If you are overweight at the start of your pregnancy, guidelines suggest you gain a little less – overweight women should aim to gain 14–23 kg, and obese women 11–19 kg. Talk to your doctor, midwife or dietitian about an individual goal for you if you are either over or underweight.

What should I do if I have morning sickness?

Morning sickness doesn’t only happen in the morning, it can happen at any time of the day. Some women have ‘morning sickness’ for just a few weeks, others are not well for the first three months, and others feel unwell for most of their pregnancy.

**See your doctor if you have severe, constant vomiting.**
Tips to help deal with morning sickness

> Sip dry ginger ale or flat lemonade slowly and in small amounts to help settle your stomach.

> As you begin to feel better, try sips of more nutritious drinks like cold diluted fruit juices, nectars or vegetable juices. Or you could try soup.

> If you tend to feel unwell or vomit first thing in the morning, keep some dry biscuits, dried fruit or sports drink next to your bed and eat/drink something before you get up.

> Have a light breakfast once you begin feeling better (e.g. cereal and low fat milk or toast and honey).

> Eat small amounts, often (every 1–2 hours) – don’t let your stomach get too full or too empty.

> Eat foods which are easy to digest and provide energy, such as plain biscuits, toast/bread with a spread, jelly, dry cereal or stewed fruit.

> Eat and drink slowly.

> Try not to lie down straight after eating or drinking.

> Sometimes it helps to have your drinks between meals rather than with meals.

> Cold foods and drinks may be better than hot – hot foods often have a stronger smell. Try sandwiches, cereals, fruit and salad.

> Low fat foods may be better than full fat. Try low fat yoghurt, cheese, icecream, milkshakes or custard.

> Try a supper snack such as a cheese sandwich, fruit and yoghurt, milk and Milo™ or Actavite™ at the time of the day when you are feeling better.
How can I treat constipation?

Constipation is not related to how often you go, but how difficult it is to pass a bowel motion. Constipation happens for a few reasons:

- Early in pregnancy, your digestion slows down and your bowel relaxes, so foods move through much slower.
- Near the end of pregnancy when the baby is large, it presses on the bowel and slows the movement through the bowel causing constipation.
- Iron supplements can also cause constipation.

Eating high fibre foods, drinking plenty of fluids and being active can all help to relieve constipation.

High fibre foods include:

- Wholemeal and wholegrain bread.
- Wholegrain cereals e.g. All Bran™, Weet-Bix™, muesli, porridge, brown rice and wholemeal pasta.
- Fruits and vegetables, especially the skin and stalks.
- Legumes e.g. baked beans, red kidney beans, red and yellow lentils.

Hints:

- Unprocessed bran, oat bran or psyllium husks sprinkled onto cereals is also a good way to add fibre to your breakfast.
- Try prunes, prune juice or kiwi fruit.
- Remember to have lots of fluids – water is best. Try to have at least 8 glasses or cups of fluid per day.
- Exercise also helps improve constipation. Regular walking can be helpful.
- A fibre supplement may also help. Speak to your pharmacist, doctor or midwife regarding these products.
Why am I having indigestion and heartburn?

Indigestion and heartburn can occur at any time during pregnancy but is more common near the end of pregnancy. As the baby grows it may press against the stomach pushing the contents up into the oesophagus or ‘food pipe’ which creates a burning feeling.

Heartburn can also result when pregnancy hormones relax the muscle that closes off between the stomach and food pipe. This can cause stomach contents to travel up, also creating a burning sensation.

It may help if you:

- avoid very spicy or seasoned foods
- avoid fried or fatty foods
- limit caffeine by drinking less tea, coffee and cola drinks
- avoid alcohol
- have small meals, often (never let your stomach get too full or too empty)
- try drinking between meals instead of with meals
- try to eat slowly and relax at meal times
- sleep with two pillows to raise your head
- avoid eating too late at night

Ask your doctor if you need medication or speak to your pharmacist about appropriate commercially available antacid tablets.
Healthy eating and breastfeeding

Is nutrition important when I am breastfeeding?

Breastmilk gives your baby the best start in life. When you are breastfeeding your body still needs some extra nutrients. These nutrients include energy, protein and calcium. You can get these extra nutrients easily by continuing to choose a variety of foods from the 5 food groups.

How much extra energy (calories/kilojoules) do I need?

Making breastmilk for your baby uses more energy (calories/kilojoules) than at any time in your pregnancy. This means it is a perfect time to slowly work towards your pre-pregnancy weight. Due to the demands of making milk, you may feel hungrier than usual. Choosing healthy snacks is a good way to look after yourself and help keep you and your baby well nourished.

Healthy snack ideas:
> fresh fruit makes a quick, easy snack
> dried fruit, nuts or seeds
> cracker biscuits with cheese or spread such as peanut butter
> fruit bread (try toasted), english muffins, pikelets, rice cakes
> plain fruit buns
> milk drinks – try fruit and milk blended together to make a fruit smoothie
> tub of yoghurt
> try blending yoghurt with fruit or fruit juice
Where do I get extra protein from?

Most Australians eat more protein than needed. Vegetarians and women with smaller intakes may need to take extra care and increase the amount of protein in their diet. While breastfeeding, choose an extra serve from the meat/fish/poultry/eggs/nuts/legumes group. Dairy foods also provide extra protein.

Try to include some protein at each meal. For example:
- cereal and milk, toast and eggs or baked beans for breakfast
- meat, fish, chicken or cheese in a sandwich for lunch
- include meat, fish, chicken, lentils or legumes with the evening meal
- include protein foods for snacks, e.g. a handful of nuts and dried fruit, cheese and crackers, biscuits with peanut butter, milk drink etc.

What about calcium?

You still need calcium when you are breastfeeding (just like when you were pregnant). Try to include around 3 serves a day from the milk/yoghurt/cheese group (4 serves per day if you are under 18 years old). It may be useful to continue taking a calcium supplement if your intake of milk and milk products is low.

What about iodine?

Extra iodine is needed when breastfeeding. Iodine requirements when breastfeeding are a little higher than in pregnancy. If you needed to take an iodine supplement while you were pregnant, then it is very likely that you will need to continue this.

See ‘What about iodine’ in the pregnancy section (page 14) for more information. If you are still unsure, speak with your doctor about taking an iodine supplement or using a pregnancy and breastfeeding multivitamin and mineral supplement that contains iodine.

Do I need extra drinks when breastfeeding?

Most women find they are thirstier than usual while breastfeeding. Drink enough fluid (especially water) to meet your thirst. There is no need to drink large amounts. More fluid does not make more breastmilk. Choose healthy drinks – either water (this is the best thirst quencher), milk or small amount of juice occasionally. Limit tea, coffee, alcohol and sweetened soft drinks.
How do I increase my supply of breastmilk?

Extra fluids or extra foods do not help to make more breastmilk. Milk supply is largely based on how often and how well your baby feeds on the breast. If your baby suckles more, you will make more milk. If your baby suckles less, you will make less milk. Therefore, the best way to increase your supply of milk is to feed your baby more often. It will also help if you drain one breast before offering the other.

Is it okay to lose weight while I am breastfeeding?

Most women are keen to return to their pre-pregnancy weight once their baby is born. Breastfeeding is a great way of doing this as it helps to use up fat stores gained during pregnancy. Avoid crash diets or rapid weight loss. Remember it took nine months to put the weight on so it may take this time (plus extra) to lose it again. So don’t rush it!

Very restricted diets may reduce your breastmilk supply and can leave you feeling run down and tired. Instead, continue to choose a variety of foods from the 5 food groups and limit the amount of extra foods (e.g. cakes, biscuits, fatty foods and alcohol). Try to get some regular exercise each day – walking your baby in a pram is a great start.

Some women find they lose weight too quickly while breastfeeding. If this is the case, try and make sure you eat regular meals and snacks and don’t miss meals. It is easy to forget about looking after yourself with a new baby, but you will be able to care for your baby better and enjoy motherhood more if you take some time for yourself. Try to plan ahead so that you have suitable snacks and food on hand that can be easily prepared. Make time to sit down and eat – try eating healthy snacks while feeding your baby. Milk drinks are an easy way to get more energy as well as other nutrients.

Should I avoid certain foods?

There are many old wives tales about foods that should be avoided whilst breastfeeding as they might ‘come through’ in the milk. However there is no need to avoid any particular foods. Some strongly flavoured foods such as curries or cabbage may affect the flavour of the milk but will do no harm. Most babies accept these different flavours well. In fact, babies whose mothers eat a range of different flavours are more likely to accept new flavours themselves when they are introduced to solid foods. So it can be a positive thing. Try not to cut out too many foods, or whole food groups from your diet if you are breastfeeding. If you are concerned about your baby reacting to foods in your diet through breastmilk, speak to your doctor or dietitian.
Are tea, coffee and cola drinks OK?
Some caffeine from tea, coffee and cola drinks will pass into the breastmilk but small quantities are not considered harmful. Try to limit your intake to 2–3 cups of tea, coffee or cola a day.

What about alcohol?
Alcohol, like most drugs, can be passed through to the breastmilk. Not drinking alcohol is the safest option, but if you choose to drink it is recommended that you:

> Breastfeed your baby before drinking alcohol
> Limit to only a small amount i.e. one standard drink
> Wait a few hours before breastfeeding again.

If you choose to drink more than this, or need to feed your baby more frequently, it may be best to feed with previously expressed breastmilk (EBM).

For more information:

> call the WCH Medicines and Drug Information Centre on 08 8161 7222

Some people believe that drinking stout or other alcoholic drinks can increase your milk supply, however, this is not true.
Good nutrition for life

Good nutrition is also important after pregnancy and breastfeeding to ensure good health for yourself and your family.

Food preferences and eating habits developed early in childhood are often carried into adulthood. To help children grow up to be healthy adults we need to teach them healthy eating habits as early as possible. It is important to be a good role model, show your children how much you enjoy eating healthy foods and they will want to follow.
The original nutritional and educational content of this booklet has been reviewed by specialist Dietitians at the Women’s and Children’s Health Network (WCHN), SA Health. Information in this booklet should not be used as an alternative to professional advice.

Food product information contained in this booklet was up to date at the time of revision. If you are not sure about a food, check with the manufacturer.

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If you require this information in an alternative language or format please contact SA Health on the details provided above and they will make every effort to assist you.

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