



{ HEALTH }

# eating for a healthy pregnancy

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**Expectant** mothers have a lot on their mind. "Is it a boy or a girl?" "Where is the best place to put a crib?" "Who will the baby look like?"

But maybe one of the most important questions is, "What should I be eating while I am pregnant?"

With so much information available, the answer can seem overwhelming. Your obstetrician should be your number one source for all things related to your pregnancy, and we went straight to an expert.

Dr. Mai Hoang, an obstetrician at Good Samaritan Hospital in San Jose wants to dispel one of the most popular myths about eating and pregnancy. "The longest held belief is that you are 'eating for two,'" says Dr. Hoang. "For the most part, the baby needs 300 calories a day in addition to what your body needs. That's like eating half a sandwich more a day."

Eating healthy while you're pregnant is similar to eating healthy in general. When Dr. Hoang talks to her patients, she recommends a well-balanced diet full of fruits and vegetables, and lean meats.

Among the key foods to avoid are sushi and soft, unpasteurized cheeses, which can both be sources of dangerous bacteria. Alcohol intake is harmful for a growing baby, and can potentially lead to learning disabilities or physical deformities. Expectant moms should also skip or significantly cut back on caffeinated beverages, which may be related to lower birth rates.

## Use an App for Tracking

In our technology-centered world, making good food choices while pregnant is easier than ever. There are countless mobile and online apps that can help you create meal plans and make sure you are getting the right variety of foods.

Dr. Hoang suggests trying ChooseMyPlate.gov, the United State Department of Agriculture's website focused on nutrition. It features a daily meal plan for pregnant moms and what they call a "Super Tracker," which makes reaching your nutrition goals interactive and fun.

In addition to food intake, a growing baby needs some specific nutrients that are typically recommended by

way of a prenatal vitamin and other supplements. The key extras are folic acid, calcium, vitamin D and iron. Folic acid helps prevent neural tube defects, while calcium and vitamin D help build the baby's bones and teeth. Extra iron is important as the blood in a mom's body increases throughout the pregnancy.

## Weight Gain Isn't "One Size Fits All"

There is a magic number when it comes to expected weight gain in pregnancy, but it might not be what you'd think. That's because the ideal number is highly individualized.

In 2009, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) published guidelines for recommended weight gain that are based on a person's body mass index (BMI) before pregnancy. According to IOM, if a woman pregnant with one baby was underweight prior to pregnancy, a 28 to 40 pound weight gain is recommended. For those who were normal weight, a 25 to 35 pound range is ideal. Women who were overweight before becoming pregnant should gain between 15 to 25 pounds, and those who were

obese are recommended to gain between 11 to 20 pounds.

"Nutrition and weight gain in pregnancy can impact the well-being of the baby years later as an adult," says Dr. Hoang. "For example, gestational diabetes increases the risks of childhood obesity."

Sticking to a healthy diet and a physical activity plan can decrease these risks. Many women may be concerned about how exercising might affect a pregnancy, but it's a common misconception that it will harm the baby. Unless an obstetrician specifically discourages exercising, continuing a regular activity plan such as walking and swimming for about two and a half hours per week is beneficial for an expectant mother.

Understanding how to stay healthy and fit during pregnancy is something all moms need to discuss with their care provider. Make sure you feel comfortable asking any question to your obstetrician—no matter what. Come see one of the more than 85 dedicated woman's health professionals at Good Samaritan Hospital, where we believe every birth is a special one and are committed to keeping moms and babies healthy and happy.

*Barbara Vaughan is Director of Women's Services at Good Samaritan Hospital in San Jose, Calif. Not only has she worked at Good Samaritan for 17 years but each of her four kids and two of her grandkids were born at the hospital. 🍌*