



Health
Nepean Blue Mountains
Local Health District

Easy meal planning and tips

For healthy bumps, birth and beyond



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Need help interpreting?



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Family Metabolic Service Booklet

NBMP-416 | 14 July 2020

The information in this booklet is for guidance only and does not replace consultation/advice by your health care provider.



Introduction

Pregnancy is a time of enormous change, both physically and emotionally. Over the coming months your body will undergo an incredible transformation whilst developing your baby.

Under and over nutrition during pregnancy, and intake of key nutrients have been linked to a number of health outcomes in the baby. Poorly balanced nutrition during pregnancy can also be linked to problems such as pre-eclampsia, post-natal depression and other health problems associated with excessive weight gain.

In a nutshell, your nutrition during pregnancy can have a lasting effect, so it is important to get it right.

It is common to become overwhelmed or confused with too much information about eating right during your pregnancy. If you are unsure what you have read or been told is right, talk to your GP, Midwife or Dietitian, who can give you the latest nutritional guidelines and practical ways to follow them.

Be prepared

Create a supportive environment for health at home by stocking up on healthy ingredients for your meals. This will help you to be able to prepare quick and healthy meals at any time.

Set aside time each week or fortnight to visit a food market, supermarket or shop online. By planning meals in advance, you will know exactly what to buy. Meal planning does take time and effort at the beginning, but will be worth it in the end as it makes deciding what to cook quick and easy. Plan to try a new healthy meal or recipe at least once a month, it makes your meals more interesting and can add to your collection of meals.

Batch cooking, or preparing food in advance and freezing in meal-size or family-size containers, means less time cooking individual meals, less money spent on eating out or take-away and is perfect for those days when you feel exhausted or want to spend less time cooking.

Take advantage of time you have before the birth or when you have more energy to prepare healthy, bulk meals like casseroles, stews, moussaka, curries, lasagne, shepherd's pie and chilli con carne, all with plenty of vegetables.

Vegetable intake

Most Australians don't eat enough vegetables, which is also common in pregnancy. Veggies are important sources of essential vitamins, minerals and fibre, as well as being low in energy so it's good to fill up on them. Try to fill up half your plate with steamed veggies or salad.

In winter – vegetable soups are a quick, easy and cost effective way to use up any leftover vegetables. Simply heat a small amount of oil in a heavy based pan, add a diced onion or leek and cook with the lid on until soft. Then add any other chopped veggies and a litre of vegetable stock and cook for 20-30 minutes. Add a can of cooked lentils, mixed beans or diced sweet potato to thicken and eat. If you prefer a smoother consistency – blitz with a hand blender to the texture you prefer.

Add extra vegetables to casseroles and pastas (carrots, zucchini, capsicum, pumpkin, mushrooms, spinach or kale; try adding legumes) or pile extra vegetables onto homemade pizza.

Go to meals

Write a list of quick 'go to' meals and ensure you change them every couple of months to prevent boredom and being tempted to buy take-away meals instead.

Keep a list of favourites as there might be some dishes that you enjoy but have forgotten about if you have not had them in a while.

Some healthy suggestions:

- Grilled salmon with mashed sweet potato and steamed mixed vegetables
- Grilled pork/lamb/beef or chicken with salad (include canned bean mixes, leftover roast vegetables).
- Chicken and veggie pesto or tomato pasta
- Stir fry with premade sauce and chicken/pork/beef
- Curry with premade curry paste
- Burritos
- Chicken & corn soup
- Sweet potato lasagne (using leftover Bolognese sauce, frozen spinach, low fat white sauce, and sliced sweet potatoes as 'lasagne' sheets)
- Garlic chicken (chicken breasts, 3 cloves garlic, oil) served with green beans stir fried with basmati rice/noodles
- Quick 'fried' rice — cooked in microwave (precooked rice, onion/shallots/bacon/ham, egg, peas (frozen), soya sauce)



Pantry essentials

Grains:

- Oats
- Weetbix™, multigrain cereal
- Wholegrain bread, crispbreads, crackers, tortillas
- Pasta shapes, spaghetti, noodles
- Basmati, brown rice, cous cous, buckwheat

Oil:

- Canola, sunflower, olive

UHT milk:

- Cows or alternative (ensure fortified with calcium)
- soya, almond, rice or oat

Fish:

- Canned salmon, tuna, sardines (in springwater or tomato sauce)

Sauces and flavours:

- Dried herbs and spices, soy sauce, balsamic vinegar, apple cider vinegar, Worcestershire sauce, pesto
- Stir fry sachet sauces, curry paste

Baking ingredients (optional):

- Flour, baking powder, dried fruit, sugar etc

Spreads:

- Vegemite, peanut butter, honey



Vegetables:

- Canned crushed tomatoes and corn, tomato paste
- potatoes, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, onions, garlic, fresh herbs

Pulses:

- Canned baked beans, lentils, 3 bean mix, kidney beans, chickpeas
- Dried lentils, legume and barley soup mix

Seasonal fruit:

- Bananas, oranges, mandarins or canned unsweetened in own juice.
- Dried apricots, sultanas

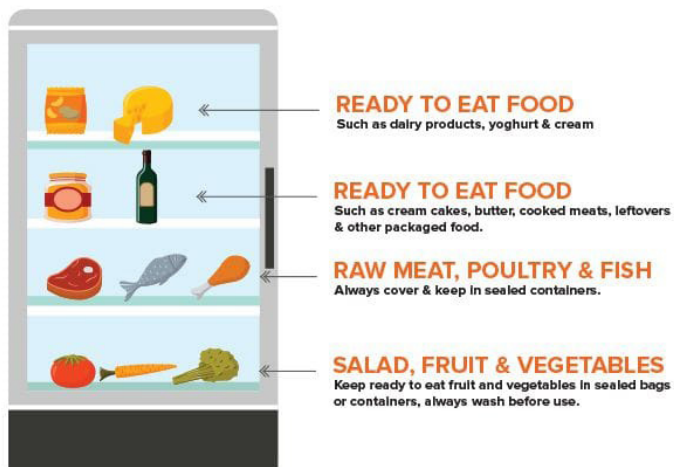
Nuts and seeds:

- Unsalted almonds, walnuts, cashews, chia, flaxseeds, sunflower, pumpkin

Fridge essentials

- Pasteurised hard cheese – cheddar, parmesan, Colby™, Swiss
- Pasteurised processed soft cheese – cream cheese, mozzarella, cottage cheese
- Light milk, low fat yoghurt - unsweetened
- Eggs
- Fresh meat and or fish– ensure to cook before use by date
- Tofu, paneer, tempeh
- Seasonal salad vegetables – lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber, capsicum, shallots, avocado, radish
- Seasonal vegetables – carrots, spinach, mushrooms, zucchini, eggplant
- Seasonal fruit – apples, pears, berries, grapes
- Low saturated fat spread
- Full water bottles

Quick checks – make sure you buy pasteurised dairy foods and check the ‘best before’ or ‘use by’ dates and storage instructions. Store cooked, ready to eat foods on the top shelves and raw foods near the bottom of your fridge. Always wash fruit and vegetables before using even if they have been washed before.



Freezer essentials

- Mixed vegetables
- Mixed stir fry vegetables
- Peas, corn, spinach
- Frozen fruit pieces
- Few healthier 'ready meals'
- Chicken breast fillets
- Salmon, fish portion
- Ice and/or ice blocks
- Mince – beef, lamb, pork, turkey, chicken or meat alternatives such as Quorn™

Remember to thaw foods properly before cooking, especially meat, chicken and fish. Defrost food slowly and safely in the fridge.

It is also advised not to eat raw frozen vegetables as they can be a source of listeria. Ensure they are thoroughly cooked by boiling, steaming or microwaving and quite hot to the touch.

In recent years, there have been a few reported risks of imported frozen berries being linked to outbreaks of Hepatitis A. You can make frozen imported berries safe by:

- bringing them to the boil for a short amount of time
- cooking them at 85 degrees Celsius for at least 1 minute

Caffeine and herbal drinks

Caffeine is in coffee, tea, chocolate and cola (and some other soft drinks and energy drinks).

NSW Health recommends that pregnant women limit themselves to 200mg of caffeine daily. That amount is obtained from about 1-2 cups of espresso style coffee, 3 cups of instant coffee, 4 cups of medium strength tea or 4 cups of cocoa or hot chocolate. Avoid double shots of espresso coffee, cola drinks and drinks marked as sports or energy drinks that contain caffeine. Try to replace drinks containing caffeine with water, milk or juice or try decaffeinated coffee and tea.

Some herbal teas, should be avoided during pregnancy. This includes teas with chamomile, aloe, coltsfoot, juniper berry, pennyroyal, buckthorn bark, comfrey, sassafras, duck root, lobelia and senna leaves.

Other herbal teas, such as citrus peel, linden flower, ginger, lemon balm, orange peel and rose hip, are generally considered safe if taken in moderation (two to three cups per day).

Product	How much caffeine?
Instant coffee	60-100 mg per cup
Fresh coffee	80-350 mg per cup
Decaffeinated coffee	2-4 mg per cup
Tea	8-90 mg per cup
Cola drinks	35 mg per 250 ml serve
Cocoa and hot chocolate	10-70 mg per cup
Chocolate bars	20-60 mg per 200 g bar
Some prescription and over the counter medications	20-100 mg per dose

Morning sickness, nausea and vomiting

For many women, morning sickness is one of the early telltale signs of pregnancy. Most common during the first trimester, pregnancy induced nausea and vomiting is thought to be caused by hormonal changes. For most women, it usually goes away after 16-20 weeks, though it can often occur at any time of the day.

To help cope with nausea and vomiting, you can:

- Identify any triggers, such as particular smells, tiredness, being too hot, travelling in a car or reflux and where possible, avoid, manage or reduce them.
- Eat every 2-3 hours during the day and have something to eat before bed (as long as reflux is not a problem).
- Get out of bed slowly and eat soon afterwards.
- Eat foods that appeal to you in frequent small amounts until you feel better. Often carbohydrate-rich, dry, bland foods are well tolerated e.g. toast, crackers, pretzels.

- Stay hydrated and drink fluids between meals and not with meals.
- Try cold water with slices of lemon, lime, frozen berries or cucumber, mint leaves or ice.
- Choose cold foods or have someone else cook if possible.
- Get plenty of fresh air.
- Try smelling fresh-cut lemons or having ginger-based foods.
- Avoid smoke, strong odours, alcohol and caffeine.

Constipation

Up to about one third of pregnant women experience constipation. Hormones are the main culprit as they slow down the movement of food through the intestinal tract. Other common causes include: dietary changes that lead to reduced fibre intake, insufficient fluid intake, insufficient exercise, iron supplements and some medications used to treat nausea.

Tips for managing constipation:

- **Eat foods high in fibre** like vegetables and fruit, whole grains and cooked or canned beans, peas and lentils.
- **Drink more fluids** you need 2.3 litres/day—that's 9 glasses or cups. You can make this up using high fluid foods such as milk, yoghurt, fruits and soups.
- **Be physically active** it is important to help keep your sluggish bowel moving.

Do not use a laxative to treat constipation if you are pregnant without checking with your doctor or healthcare provider first. Laxatives can trigger the onset of labour contractions.



Swelling

Pregnant women naturally retain more water in their bodies, so this is perfectly normal.

Your fluid requirements increase during pregnancy as you need more fluid for your increased blood volume and breast milk. Now is not the time to cut back on your fluid intake.

Even when you feel bloated, you still need to keep drinking water and other fluids (like milk, fruit juice and soup) to stay healthy.

To reduce swelling, put your feet up, avoid crossing your legs, wear loose clothing and get plenty of rest and exercise.

Heartburn/acid reflux

Heartburn is common during pregnancy. Between your oesophagus (food pipe) and stomach is a muscle that is usually closed tight to keep the strong acidic stomach contents contained. During pregnancy, hormones cause this muscle to relax and open, causing the classic symptoms of heartburn and reflux.

The following suggestions might help:

- Do not lie down for at least 2-3 hours after eating.
- When you do lie down, raise your head and shoulders with pillows.
- Avoid fried, greasy and spicy foods.
- Drink fluids between meals, not with meals.
- Avoid coffee, colas, alcohol and smoking.
- Eat slowly, take the time to chew well.
- Eat small meals and snacks.
- Some women take an antacid medicine to help with heartburn.
- An antacid reduces the amount of acid in your stomach. Not all antacids are safe for pregnant women. Check with your doctor or health care provider before you take one.

Quick & easy meal suggestions

Breakfast

Porridge with fruit

Top porridge with sliced fresh fruit or berries, or add a handful of dried fruits or have a piece of fruit on the side. Make the porridge with lite milk for extra calcium and protein.

Overnight Oatmeal with Walnuts and Apple

Prepare this oatmeal the night before. Mix 1/2 cup of rolled oats with 1/2 cup of milk in a mason jar, sprinkle with a tablespoon of chopped walnuts, and half a grated apple. Shake, then leave in the fridge overnight.

Anytime Toastie

Use wholegrain bread or a wrap, and add sweet potato, capsicum, tomato, spinach and cheese. Fold to form an enclosed parcel. Cook until lightly browned.

Wholegrain Toast, Bagel or English Muffin

Have it with Peanut Butter and banana, smashed avocado and Vegemite and add a glass of milk

Yoghurt with fruit

You can try any fresh or tinned-in-juice fruit and plain yoghurt with wholemeal toast on the side or oats sprinkled on top.

Scrambled Egg

You can have lightly cooked eggs so long as they are cooked thoroughly, no transparent or raw bits. Try scrambled egg with grilled tomatoes and a wholemeal bagel.

Breakfast Smoothie

Use any of your favourite fruits either fresh, canned or frozen and blend with either milk or low fat yoghurt and unsweetened fruit juice.

If nauseous – try whole wheat crackers with cheddar cheese and cold peppermint tea.

Snacks

- Fruit
- Yoghurt (Greek, natural, low fat, unsweetened)
- Wholemeal crackers or vegetable sticks with dips e.g. hummus, tzatziki
- Wholegrain toast with Vegemite™
- Raisin toast
- Wholemeal scone
- Dried fruit, seed and nut mix
- Unsalted popcorn
- Peanut butter and banana on toast



Lunch/light meals

- Baked bean and cheese toasty on wholegrain bread
- Wholemeal sandwich or wrap with fillings e.g. tinned tuna/sardines with cucumber, cheese and chutney, leftover roast meat and salad, hummus, grated carrot, sultanas and spinach, Vegemite™, peanut butter, banana, cheese and tomato, egg and lettuce
- Homemade roasted veggie and lentil soup

Vegetable omelette

Heat a large skillet coated with olive oil over a medium heat. Add 2 beaten eggs, allowing them to cover the bottom of the pan. Cook for 2 minutes, or until the bottom begins to set. When nearly cooked, top one half of the omelette with capsicum, tomato and mushrooms. Fold the remaining half over the filling and cook for 2 minutes, or until cooked through. Serve immediately.

Pita pizza

Use whole-wheat pita pockets, tomato paste, a few veggies e.g. capsicum, mushroom and low-fat mozzarella for a simple pizza. Assemble and bake for 10 minutes at 200 degrees celsius.

Quick and easy pizza

Put chopped tomatoes and other vegetables such as capsicum or mushrooms onto a baguette and sprinkle grated cheese on top. Put it under the grill to melt the cheese. Add an apple.

Lunch/light meals (continued)

Sardines on toast

Tinned sardines or mackerel on wholemeal toast with sliced tomato.

Baked beans on wholemeal toast

If you are struggling with eating dairy, add a little grated cheese for extra flavour.

Chicken in pita

Wholemeal pita bread filled with grilled chicken and lots of salad.

Tuna salad

Half a regular tin of tuna and salad vegetables of your choice. Turn it into a tuna nicoise by adding pitted olives and a chopped, hard boiled egg!

Mixed bean salad

Can of 5 mixed beans, drained and washed. Add canned or cooked corn kernels, washed and diced capsicums, cucumber, tomato, spring onions, mint or basil leaves. Add dressing made of 1/3 oil and 2/3 balsamic vinegar.

Toasted sandwich

Use wholegrain bread and fill with either cheese and tomato (optional to add a sprinkle of mixed herbs), tuna and corn, baked beans, ham or cheese and pineapple.



Lunch at work

The safest option is to pack your own lunch, that way you can be sure it was prepared safely, and, if you have a fridge at work it can be stored safely. Consider an insulated lunchbox with an ice brick if you have a long commute to work.

Sandwiches, wraps, crackers or soups are all good. For fillings, try well-cooked boiled eggs, tinned salmon or tuna, baked beans, hard cheeses or salad. You can take leftovers as long as they can be kept cool and then reheated until piping hot. If you still prefer to buy your lunch, choose items that are well cooked and ideally cooked fresh e.g. stir fries, toasted sandwiches, pasta dishes.



Contact information

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