

Nutrition, vitamins and Weight Recommendations in Pregnancy

Maternity Department

Congratulations on being pregnant. We hope your pregnancy will be healthy and enjoyable. Now that you are pregnant, it's important to eat healthily and well. Good nutrition will help keep you healthy and help your baby grow and develop. Being physically active will also benefit you and your baby. Your midwife will be able to advise on how to incorporate physical activity and how to do this safely and also how to eat healthily in pregnancy and which vitamins are advisable. There are several evidence based web sites which are recommended to read pre conception or as soon as you find out you are pregnant.

A healthy diet will benefit both you and your baby during pregnancy and after birth. The website [The Eat well Guide - NHS](#) can provide more information about a healthy diet.

[Have a healthy diet in pregnancy - NHS](#)

[Foods to avoid in pregnancy - NHS](#)

It is also advisable to cut out smoking and alcohol use completely if this is relevant to you. Your midwife can signpost to extra support if required at your booking appointment.

[Vitamins in pregnancy \(see links below\)](#)

[Vitamins, minerals and supplements in pregnancy - NHS](#)

[Healthy eating and vitamin supplements in pregnancy | RCOG](#)

Eating a healthy, varied [diet in pregnancy](#) will help you get most of the vitamins and minerals you need. But when you're pregnant, or there's a chance you might get pregnant, it's important to also take a folic acid supplement and depending on circumstances Vitamin D.

- **400 micrograms of folic acid every day** – from before you're pregnant until you're 13 weeks pregnant. You may require a higher dose of 5 milligrams of folic acid if you have certain other conditions such as you, or your partner having a neural tube defect, or a family history of neural tube defects, or you have Diabetes, or take anti-epilepsy or anti-retroviral medications, or have an existing need for folic acid supplementation for a haematological condition such as sickle cell or Thalassemia. Folic acid can help prevent birth defects known as neural tube defects, including [spina bifida](#).
- **A daily [vitamin D](#) supplement** (10 micrograms or 400 international units [IU] a day) between October and March (because the body produces vitamin D from direct sunlight on the skin, and between October and early March, the sun is not strong enough for the body to make enough vitamin D).
- You should take vitamin D (10 micrograms or 400 IU a day) throughout the year if you are at increased risk of vitamin D deficiency because, for example:
 - have darker skin, such as people of African, African-Caribbean or south Asian ethnicity, because they may need more sunlight exposure to produce the same amount of vitamin D as people with lighter skin pigmentation **or**
 - Have little or no exposure to sunshine because not often outdoors or usually wear clothes that cover up most of your skin when outdoors.Vitamin D regulates the amount of calcium and phosphate in the body, which are needed to keep bones, teeth and muscles healthy.
- Do not take cod liver oil or any supplements containing vitamin A (retinol) when you're pregnant. Too much vitamin A could harm your baby. Always check the label.

- **Iron in pregnancy**

If you do not have enough iron, you'll probably get very tired and may suffer from [anaemia](#). Routine Iron supplementation is not recommended but try to include in your diet, Lean meat, green leafy vegetables, dried fruit and nuts as they contain iron. Many breakfast cereals have iron added to them. If the iron level in your blood becomes low, a GP or midwife will advise you to take iron supplements.

Healthy Start Vouchers and Vitamins and help with food costs.

If you're more than 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under 4, you may be entitled to get help to buy healthy food and milk. See link: [Get help to buy food and milk \(Healthy Start\)](#)

If you're eligible, you'll be sent a Healthy Start card with money on it that you can use in some UK shops. Your benefit will be added onto this card every 4 weeks.

You will also be entitled to free healthy start pregnancy vitamins and the vitamin drops for babies and young children. If money is an issue for you, you can [find a food bank through the Trussell Trust](#), or through your [Citizen's Advice Bureau](#)

What is a healthy weight?

Your midwife will work out your body mass index (BMI) at the beginning of pregnancy to find out whether you are a healthy weight for your height and to therefore advise and plan your care together in relation to this. .

[BMI calculator](#)

BMI	Healthy range	18.5 to 25
	Underweight	less than 18.5
	Overweight.	25-30
	Obese	30 and above

During pregnancy there is a greater chance of certain problems if your BMI is less than 18 or more than 30.

Weight gain in pregnancy: On line information:

[Weight Gain in Pregnancy | Tommy's \(tommys.org\)](#)

[Being overweight in pregnancy and after birth | RCOG](#)

It is important to accept that you are going to become bigger during pregnancy. **Do not try to diet to lose weight** during pregnancy but try to eat healthily and be as active as you can. There is no need to "eat for two" during pregnancy. In fact, your body becomes more efficient and you only need an extra 200 calories per day in the last 3 months (equivalent to a small sandwich or a pot of yogurt and a banana).

- A BMI of 25 or above is associated with risks for you and your baby.
- The higher your BMI, the greater the risks are.
- Some of the risks with raised BMI include increased risk of thrombosis, gestational diabetes, high blood pressure, pre-eclampsia, induction of labour, caesarean birth, anaesthetic complications and wound infections.
- A raised BMI also increases your risk of having a miscarriage, giving birth early, having a big baby or having a stillbirth.
- Healthy eating and exercise can benefit you and your baby.

Trying to lose weight by dieting during pregnancy is not recommended. However, by making healthy changes to your diet, you may not gain any weight during pregnancy and you may even lose a small amount. This is not harmful.

What are the problems with being [underweight](#) in pregnancy?

If you have a low BMI in pregnancy you have an increased [chance](#) of the following problems:

- Having a low birth weight (small) baby
- Premature birth

- Anaemia (low amount of iron in the blood)

Exercise in pregnancy: Online information:

[Making a Safe Pregnancy Workout Plan | Tommy's \(tommys.org\)](#)

[Physical activity for pregnant women.](#)

[Exercise in pregnancy - NHS](#)

Being physically active is a great way to help you stay well during pregnancy. It can also help you cope with labour. If your pregnancy is uncomplicated, being as active as possible will benefit you and your baby.

Aim for around 30 minutes a day. You do not need to join a gym or do an organized exercise class to stay active unless you want to. All types of physical activity including walking gardening and swimming and pregnancy yoga will help you stay fit during and after pregnancy. The idea is to maintain your fitness levels, rather than become super-fit. Build up gradually if exercise is new to you.

During pregnancy you should avoid contact sports where there is a risk of being hit in the abdomen, such as kick-boxing, martial arts or squash.

Benefits of being active in pregnancy:

- You are less likely to get [lower back pain](#).
- It helps you keep fit.
- It improves your [mental wellbeing](#).
- It may help you sleep better.
- You may be more likely to have a vaginal birth, if this is what you want.
- You may recover from the birth more quickly.

Here is a helpful infographic from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists on how to incorporate physical activity safely.

Bariatric surgery

If you have undergone bariatric surgery and are planning a pregnancy or are pregnant, you should to contact your bariatric surgery unit for individualised, specialist advice about folic acid and other micronutrients. **[NICE 2025]**



Plan for your care

If your BMI is 18 or less, or your BMI is 35 or more, or less if you have any pre-existing medical conditions: You will be booked for your care with a doctor at the hospital because of the increased chance of certain complications. They will discuss the risks associated with a raised BMI and make an individualised plan of care for your pregnancy and birth with you, depending on your needs and birth preferences.

If your BMI is above 30 you will be seen by a midwife who will discuss your individual risks and make an individualised plan of care for your pregnancy and birth with you, depending on your needs and birth preferences.

Your midwife will monitor your weight gain during your pregnancy. She can help you to manage your weight safely. If you would like to discuss your diet in more detail, please ask to have an appointment to see a dietitian

Offer of referral for extra one to one support if BMI is over 30.

If your BMI is 30 or above your midwife can offer you the opportunity to have free extra one to one support from Herefordshire Healthy lifestyle Service. The trainers can support you with your healthy eating and exercise goals during your pregnancy and beyond.

After the baby is born

It is important to try to breastfeed for your own and your baby's health. If you are having difficulties, please speak to your midwife for advice. You can get further advice from the Infant Feeding team and there is ongoing free community support. After the pregnancy it is important to return to a healthy weight. Losing weight gradually will not affect the quality or amount of breastmilk you produce. The Healthy Lifestyle team again can support you with this if this is your goal.

It is recommended that infants who are breastfed commence vitamin D drops following birth of 8.5 to 10 micrograms or Healthy start vitamins drops if available.

Pregnancy is a great time for learning about healthy eating and physical activity.

One of the most important things we can do for our children is to give them a Healthy Start in life.

Reference

[Overview | Maternal and child nutrition: nutrition and weight management in pregnancy, and nutrition in children up to 5 years | Guidance | NICE](#)

How to provide feedback

Our aim is to provide a quality of care we would want for ourselves, our families and friends. If there was anything that we could have done please let us know via the department/ward staff or the patient experience team available on 01432 372986 or email PALs@wvt.nhs.uk (opening times may vary).

We also have the Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership a volunteer group which works in partnership with our service to ensure service user representation their email is hwicb.hmnvp@nhs.net

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille, Audio tape or other languages upon request. Please contact patient experience team on the above telephone number.

You may be asked to give your opinion on the service you have received. We welcome your feedback as this will help us to improve the care and treatment we provide to our patients.

Wye Valley NHS Trust www.wyevalley.nhs.uk Telephone 01432 355444