

“What to eat- or not eat- during pregnancy”

If you are pregnant, you have probably heard the old term “you are eating for two now”. This is not a correct idea. Studies have shown that a pregnant woman only needs 300 calories more than her non-pregnant diet to build a healthy baby. That is equivalent to an extra snack once a day.

Many women complain of eating too much simply because they are hungry. The hormone Progesterone, that is dominant in pregnancy, tends to make you feel hungry. For some women it is hard to not snack all day long.

Most prenatal vitamins have some essential nutrients such as folate, calcium, iron, and zinc. You should get 800 to 1000mg folate, 1300mg calcium, 27 mg elemental iron, and 11 mg zinc. Your vitamin should be adequate.

You should also get plenty of water each day, 71 grams of Protein, 30 grams of dietary fiber.

Women should avoid certain foods and drinks during pregnancy. Obviously, you should avoid things that are not good for you- because they are also not good for your growing baby. Do not consume Alcohol. Caffeine should be consumed in moderation. High amounts may cause problems and contribute to an irritable baby after delivery. Avoid “junk” foods because they have little nutritional value and empty calories that contribute to weight gain.

There are some foods that may have unsafe levels of the bacteria called Listeria. This can make you very sick and endanger your pregnancy. Listeria can be found in the environment, such as outdoor and soil. Animals can also be carriers. Listeria can be found in uncooked meats, unpasteurized milk, foods made from unpasteurized milk, uncooked vegetables, and some processed foods. Listeria is killed by pasteurization and cooking the food till it is steaming. Even though most sandwich meats or hotdog labels state that they are fully cooked, there is a chance that contamination may occur after cooking and before packaging. It is recommended to heat hotdogs or cold cuts prior to eating. Soft cheeses and blue cheese should be avoided if not planning to heat them. Fortunately, getting sick from Listeria is uncommon because of food safety education.

Some believe that nitrites, used as a preservative, may be harmful in pregnancy. However, the levels are so low that no proven problems have occurred and they are considered safe.

Uncooked fish may contain some parasites, and should be avoided. Deep sea fish such as Swordfish, Shark and King Mackerel should be avoided due to higher mercury levels. Other fish should be limited to 12 oz. per week.

Above all, if it doesn't smell good to your pregnant nose...Don't eat it!

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Resources for more good information are:

<http://www.americanpregnancy.org/pregnancyhealth/pregnancynutrition.html>

<http://www.marchofdimes.com/pregnancy/nutrition.html>

<http://www.webmd.com/baby/guide/eating-right-when-pregnant>