

English

Advice about food for you who are pregnant



LIVSMEDELS
VERKET

During pregnancy many women start to think about their eating habits. Perhaps you do, too. Previously you have only needed to think about yourself. Now you have to consider the health of two people.

This brochure gives you some simple advice about good eating habits – before as well as after your child is born.

What shall I eat?

In order for the child inside you to be able to grow and develop, you need more nutrition than usual. For example you need more vitamins and minerals, though not all too many more calories. The best way of getting sufficient nourishment is by means of good and nutritious food.

Different kinds of food contain different nutrients – protein, carbohydrates, fat, vitamins and minerals. That is why it is good to have a varied diet.

Good to eat

- ❖ 500 g fruit and vegetables every day, for example two portions of vegetables and three of fruit
- ❖ fish 2–3 times a week; see the fish list on page 3
- ❖ skimmed milk, natural skimmed sour milk and natural low-fat yoghurt, about half a litre a day
- ❖ low-fat margarine on your sandwiches and liquid margarine or oil for cooking purposes
- ❖ meat, chicken, eggs, beans, lentils or peas every day
- ❖ bread and potatoes, rice, pasta, bulgur wheat or similar every day – preferably a wholegrain alternative.

Drink water with your meals and when you are thirsty.

The plate model provides balance

In order to achieve a good balance between different nutrients you can use the plate model when serving your meal. It shows the appropriate proportions of the various types of food.



Fish and shellfish is good for you

Fish and shellfish are rich in vitamin D, iodine and selenium, all of which are important when you are pregnant. Oily fish, such as salmon and mackerel, also contain omega 3-fat. So eat fish 2-3 times a week and choose different kinds, both oily and non-oily.

A few kinds may contain raised levels of mercury or dioxins and PCB. You should not eat these as often, maximum 2-3 times a year. This is particularly relevant if you eat fish that have not been caught commercially since many of the kinds in question are caught by anglers.

Eat 2-3 times a week, choose different kinds

Examples of ordinary fish, fish products and shellfish that are safe to eat:

All farmed fish
Alaska pollock
Anchovies
Blue mussels
Canned tuna
Catfish
Cod
Crab, the white flesh
Crayfish
Fishballs
Fish-fingers
Flounders/dabs
Haddock
Hake
Herring, including pickled
Hoki
Lobster
Mackerel
Plaice
Prawns
Saithe
Salmon and trout
Sardines
Scallops
Stockfish
Tilapia
Whitefish

The list is not
exhaustive and there
are many other
kinds that are good
to eat.

A couple of times a year

Eat maximum 2-3 times a year
- because of mercury:

Atlantic halibut (*Hippoglossus hippoglossus*)
Burbot
Perch
Pike
Pikeperch
Ray
Shark
Swordfish
Tuna, fresh/frozen

Eat maximum 2-3 times a year
- because of dioxins, PCB:

Baltic herring, fermented Baltic herring

Salmon and salmon trout from the Baltic, Lake Vänern and Vättern and char from Lake Vättern. The advice primarily concerns women who eat fish that have been caught non-commercially, since these fish are seldom to be found in normal shops.

Certain fish are less good to eat for environmental reasons. Read more about fish and the environment on www.livsmedelsverket.se.

How much should I eat?

When you are pregnant you need more nutrition than normal, but not so many more calories. On the average this is how much *extra* food is needed per day:

Months 1–3:

1 portion of fruit

Months 4–6:

1 filling snack

1 portion of fruit

Months 7–9:

2 filling snacks
and 1 portion of fruit

In order not to put on too much weight, but still get enough nutrition, it is important to eat good and nutritious food. Cut down on soft drinks, sweets, ice-cream, cakes and treats. They give neither you nor the child any nutrition but only add unnecessary calories.

The longing for sweet things, the tiredness and nausea are often reduced if you eat regularly – eat breakfast, lunch and dinner and something between meals. Your body profits from routines and it will be easier to eat the appropriate amounts.



How much weight should I put on?

An adequate weight gain is important both for the child and for your health. A healthy weight increase reduces the risk of pregnancy-related diabetes and high blood pressure. The actual delivery can also be easier if you do not put on too much weight. How much is the right amount depends on how much you weighed before the pregnancy. Consult your midwife regarding what is right for you.

On the other hand you should not try to diet when you are pregnant. It is important for you to eat good and nutritious food, cut down on unnecessary calories and take exercise – preferably 30 minutes every day.

The keyhole – quick guide to good food habits

If you want to find healthier food in an easy way then the keyhole symbol can help you - both when you are shopping and when you eat out.

Keyhole-labelled food contains less and healthier fat, less sugar and salt and more fibre than other foods of the same type.

Fruit, vegetables, meat and fish can be keyhole-labelled. Low-fat charcuterie and dairy products can also carry the keyhole symbol, as can high-fibre bread, cereals and pasta.



How shall I get sufficient vitamins and minerals?

The best way of getting the vitamins and minerals you need is through your food. And, of course, it also contains other necessary nutrients.

Choose food rich in vitamin D, omega 3-fat, folate (folic acid) and iron. These substances are of particular importance during pregnancy.

Good sources of

DHA, an omega 3-fat

Oily fish, such as salmon, mackerel and herring.

If you never eat fish your intake of certain kinds of omega 3-fat (DHA) that are needed during pregnancy may be too low. Consult your midwife if you never eat fish.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D-fortified foods: Skimmed milk, skimmed sour milk, natural low-fat yoghurt, most types of margarine. Fish and eggs. Sunlight, too, is an important source.

If you do not eat vitamin D-fortified foods or if you cover your entire body in clothes when outdoors, you can be short of vitamin D. Consult your midwife.

Folate/folic acid

Vegetables, beans, chickpeas, lentils, fruit, berries and wholegrain products.

It is recommended that all women who might become pregnant should take 400 microgram folic acid tablets every day up to week 12 of the pregnancy in order to reduce the risk of spina bifida in the foetus.

After week 12 folic acid has no effect against spina bifida. On the other hand it is important to eat food rich in folate/folic acid during your entire pregnancy. This is needed for the development of your child and forming your blood cells.

Iodine

You also need iodine during pregnancy. Therefore, use iodine-fortified salt, but do not use too much salt. Many mineral, herbal and flaked salts are not iodine-fortified. Read on the packaging.

Iron

Meat, liver pâté, black pudding and wholegrain bread.

Even if you eat food that contains a lot of iron you may still need iron tablets. This depends on how much iron you have stored in your body. Consult your midwife.

To bear in mind

Alcohol can be transferred to your child via the placenta. The foetus is more sensitive to alcohol than you are, so refrain from alcohol as soon as you believe that you are pregnant.

Liver contains a lot of vitamin A which, in high doses, can harm your child. Therefore avoid liver, liver dishes and fish liver oil. Liver pâté can be eaten – it does not contain so much liver.

Coffee and **black** tea contain caffeine which, in high doses, can increase the risk of miscarriage. When you are pregnant, therefore, you should not have more than 300 milligrams of caffeine per day. This corresponds to either three cups of coffee (150 cl. per cup) or six cups of black tea (200 ml. per cup). Cola drinks and energy drinks can also contain caffeine.

Food supplements, herbal products, natural remedies and **herbal medicinal products** are things you should be careful about, since you often don't know whether they can be harmful to the child. Do not use such products without first having discussed them with your midwife or a doctor.

If you take vitamin tablets it is important to follow the dosage instructions and to avoid overdosing. Also ensure that they do not contain more than 1 milligram vitamin A per daily dose.

You should totally avoid ginseng products. They are unsuitable when you are pregnant. Be careful, too, with algae products that contain a lot of iodine. Excessive doses of iodine can be harmful.

Listeriosis and **toxoplasmosis** are two infections that can infect via food and that are of particular importance when you are pregnant. The risk of infection is very small but, if you become infected then, in the worst case, the infection can cause a miscarriage or damage to the foetus. This is very uncommon.

Listeria and toxoplasma die when the food is heated until piping hot. Toxoplasma also dies if the food is frozen for three days, but listeria survives freezing.

Some advice that can further reduce the risk of being infected by listeria and toxoplasma:

- ❖ Keep chilled foods cold, preferably at +4°C in the refrigerator.
- ❖ Gravad, smoked fish and sushi: eat newly made or newly packaged products. Check the packaging date.
- ❖ Do not eat raw meat. Minced meat, poultry, lamb, pork and game should be well done.
- ❖ Avoid sliced sandwich fillings and cold ready-made food towards the end of their best-before date.
- ❖ If you want to eat dried, cold-smoked or gravat meat, such as parma ham or salami – freeze it for three days before you eat it.
- ❖ Avoid cheese made from unpasteurised milk. Also avoid mould-ripened or washed rind cheese even if it is made of pasteurised milk, for example brie, gorgonzola, chèvre, vacherol and taleggio. Cheese used in cooking that has been heated until it is bubbling is quite safe to eat.
- ❖ Wash your hands before starting to prepare food, between different raw materials and after working in the garden. Wash the cutting board and cooking utensils between different foods.
- ❖ Wash fruit and vegetables.

The toxoplasma parasite can also be spread through cat faeces. Read more on www.sva.se.



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