

Maintaining a Healthy Weight in Pregnancy

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A Guide for Pregnant Women

This leaflet is intended to help women understand why it is important to maintain a healthy weight in pregnancy and what the term 'healthy weight' means. This leaflet will provide guidance as to how to maintain weight during pregnancy. It will also give guidance as to the plans which will be made if the midwife is concerned that maternal weight could cause problems for mother or baby.

Gaining Weight in Pregnancy

Weight gain during pregnancy can be a sensitive issue. It is generally acceptable to gain 10 - 13 kg (22-28lb) during pregnancy. However, women who are already overweight when they become pregnant are putting themselves and their babies at risk. For women already overweight when they become pregnant, it is advisable to gain little or no additional weight at all during pregnancy.

BMI: Are you the right Weight for your Height?

Your Body Mass Index (BMI) is a useful way to find out if you are a healthy weight for your height. Your BMI will be calculated by your midwife.

BMI	Recommendations
Below 18.5 Underweight	Follow a healthy diet and discuss your diet with a midwife
18.5 – 24.9 Normal	You are a good weight, follow a healthy diet
25.0 – 29.9 Overweight	You are classed as overweight, discuss your diet with a midwife

monitored more regularly and a large blood pressure cuff will be used (this is more accurate).

Those women who have been identified as having a BMI 40 or over will have an individual assessment of manual handling requirements and tissue viability assessed by their named midwife.

References

CEMACE (2010) Maternal Obesity in the UK: findings from a national project United Kingdom

CEMACH (2007) Saving Mothers Live 2003-2005. London.

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. (NICE 2010). Weight Management, Before During and After Pregnancy: NICE Public Health Guidance 27

adding it at the table. Use herbs, spices, mustard etc. to flavour foods instead

- Use only a small amount of cooking oil e.g. olive, corn rapeseed or sunflower oil. Thinly scrape on butter or spreads and be spare with mayonnaise and other fatty sauces and dressings
- Steam, bake or grill your food to avoid adding extra fats.

Pregnancy Care for women with a BMI of 35 and above

Women with a BMI of 35 or above will be recommended to give birth in a consultant unit where water birth facilities are not available.

They will be advised to take a 5mg dose of folic acid during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.

Ideally they should take vitamin D 10 micrograms supplementation daily during pregnancy and whilst breast feeding.

An appointment will be arranged for women to meet with an appropriately trained professional to discuss possible labour complications.

For those women who have been identified as having a BMI of 40 or above, an appointment with an anaesthetist will also be considered.

An extra growth scan will be arranged during the last 12 weeks of pregnancy.

A test to detect the onset of gestational diabetes will be arranged between 26 and 30 weeks of pregnancy.

The frequency of antenatal appointments will be increased. This will enable blood pressure to be

30.0 – 34.9 Obese	You are classed as very overweight and need to pay attention to your diet
35 and above Morbidly obese	You are at risk of increased complications during your pregnancy and labour, you need to discuss the plan for your care with your midwife

Why is a Healthy Weight Important When you are Pregnant

Being overweight can cause the following problems:

- Miscarriage.
- Difficulty in scanning and palpating the baby during pregnancy.
- A larger than average baby which could make delivery more difficult.
- Gestational diabetes (a form of diabetes which develops in pregnancy).
- Greater difficulty with the siting of epidural and spinal blocks.
- Greater risks with general anaesthetics.
- A greater chance that your child could develop problems with obesity.
- Pre-eclampsia (a potentially dangerous condition characterised by high blood pressure, protein in the urine and severe swelling).
- Slower progress in labour.
- Shoulder dystocia (The shoulders get stuck during birth).
- Difficulties monitoring the baby's heart rate.

- Increased need for emergency Caesarean Section.
- Increased risk of your baby dying during the pregnancy.
- Wound infection.
- Blood clots in the legs (DVT) particularly after surgery.
- Post partum haemorrhage (heavy bleeding).

What to do if your BMI is over 25!

It is realistic to aim to maintain your weight during pregnancy and look towards losing weight afterwards. All women should be doing some physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle; this is also true during pregnancy! If you were already very active before pregnancy, aim to maintain this level but try not to do more than before. If you were not active before pregnancy, try doing some gentle exercise such as walking or swimming, for 15 minutes three times each week and as you get fitter, aim to increase this to 30 minutes four to five times each week.

Healthy Eating in Pregnancy

Healthy eating in pregnancy is no different from any other time in your life. It simply means eating foods from the five main food groups and choosing them in the appropriate quantities.

Which foods should I Choose?

- **Starchy foods** e.g. bread, cereals, potato, rice pasta and couscous. These provide you with energy. Higher fibre varieties such as wholemeal pasta, brown rice, potatoes with skins on etc. are more filling and can help reduce constipation. Snacks can be based around these foods to keep energy levels up.

- **Fruit and vegetables** provide you with vitamins and minerals as well as being a great source of fibre. Aim to eat five or more different portions per day. These foods should make up a third of each meal and can be used as snacks. They are filling without too many calories.
- **Meat, fish, pulses, lentils, beans, eggs** provide you with protein and iron. Try to choose lean cuts of meat. Try to have fish at least twice a week, one of which should be of the oily type (salmon, herring, sardines, pilchards, mackerel). Pulses are an excellent source of fibre and can be used in casseroles or salads. These foods should make up a quarter of the main meal plate.
- **Milk and Dairy foods** are an important source of calcium, which is vital for strong bones and teeth. Aim to have three portions every day. One portion is equal to a third of a pint of milk, 1x125 g yogurt, or 25 g cheese. Choose low or reduced fat products when possible.
- **Foods containing fat and sugar** such as margarine, butter, oil and cakes as well as sugary foods like sweets, biscuits, pastries and ordinary squash and fizzy drinks. Keep foods from this group to a minimum and choose low fat, low sugar varieties if possible.

Healthy Eating Tips

- Try to eat 3 regular meals with a healthy snack in between if required.
- Take less sugar by opting for low calorie fizzy drinks and sugar free cereals sweetened with dried or fresh fruit. Use a sweetener such as Splenda, Hermesetas or Canderel in drinks or in foods.
- Use only a small amount of salt in cooking and avoid