



WEIGHT GAIN DURING PREGNANCY

Understanding your weight gain is an important step towards a healthy pregnancy.

The amount of weight you gain during pregnancy can affect your own health as well as your baby's health and development. But how much should you gain?

The recommended amount of weight gain depends on your pre-pregnancy weight. Use the table below as a guide, remembering that it is a guide only and there are circumstances where a different weight goal may be recommended by your midwife, doctor or dietitian.

You will need to calculate your body mass index (BMI) to use the table. Your BMI is your pre-pregnancy weight in kilos divided by your height in meters squared. For example;

- if your pre-pregnancy weight is 72 kg and your height is 162 centimetres (1.62 meters), to work out your BMI divide your weight by your height then divide again by height, i.e.
 $72 \div 1.62 \div 1.62 = 27$.
- Your BMI is 27. Your recommended weight gain is 7 to 11 kilos

You can also follow how your weight is progressing by plotting it on a graph. *Graphs for your BMI are available on our website.*

If you are having twins there is information about recommended weight gain in the fact sheet *Healthy eating when pregnant with twins.*

More than 50 per cent of women gain more than the recommended amount of weight. This extra weight increases the risk of gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy), high blood pressure, a difficult delivery and it can be hard to lose the weight after pregnancy. The baby may be bigger than normal increasing its risk of weight problems, diabetes and heart disease later in life.

Not gaining enough weight can also be a problem, especially if what you eat does not meet the nutrient requirements of pregnancy. Babies born too small have a risk of similar long-term health problems.

BMI	Recommended weight gain over the whole pregnancy	Recommended weight gain per month in the 2 nd and 3 rd trimester *
BMI less than 18.5 (<i>underweight</i>)	12.5 to 18kg	2 to 2.6kg
18.5 to 24.9 (<i>healthy weight</i>)	11.5 to 16kg	1.5 to 2.3kg
18.5 to 22.9 if Asian		
25 to 29.9 (<i>overweight</i>)	7 to 11.5kg	1 to 1.5kg
23 to 27.5 if Asian		
30 or more	5 to 9kg	0.8 to 1.2kg
or over 27.5 if Asian	(less than 7kg if Asian)	

* Average gain in the first three months is 1/2 to 2 kilos for everyone.

Factors that affect weight gain.

Many factors affect weight gain including how you eat and exercise as well as pregnancy symptoms. Morning sickness can cause weight changes in the first trimester. Weight loss is not usually a problem as long as eating returns to normal in the second trimester. Weight will usually be regained and will continue to increase normally. If sickness is severe or prolonged seek advice from your doctor or midwife. See the *Nausea and vomiting in pregnancy* fact sheet for more information.

Nausea is sometimes helped by frequent eating and this may cause you to gain a few extra kilos in early pregnancy. The rate of weight gain usually slows down as nausea subsides and your appetite returns to normal.

Appetite changes, cravings and aversions may also occur, particularly in the first trimester and may affect weight. Appetite and taste often return to normal in the second trimester.

Fluid retention (oedema) can affect weight, especially later in pregnancy.

What should I do if I'm not gaining enough weight?

If you're eating regular meals with a good variety of foods from the five food groups and your appetite is good, chances are that your low weight gain is not a problem. If you are not sure that you are eating enough, aim for three meals a day and snacks in between. Nutritious snacks include yoghurt, cheese and crackers, nuts, dried fruit, muesli bars and milk-based drinks.

Ask to see a dietitian if problems persist and you are not able to eat a nutritionally adequate diet.

What should I do if I'm gaining too much weight or was overweight at the beginning of pregnancy?

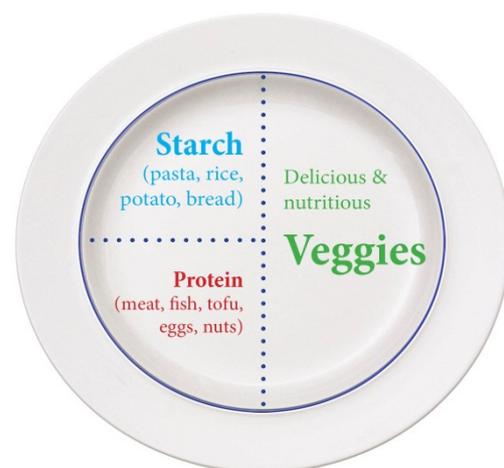
Pregnancy is not a time for strict dieting but you can afford to reduce kilojoules from energy dense foods like chocolate, lollies, takeaways, fried foods and sweet drinks.

If you are part way through your pregnancy and have gained more weight than recommended, the aim is to slow the rate of weight gain for the remainder of pregnancy, not to lose weight.

Ask to see a dietitian if you would like help with managing your weight.

Here are some key steps to help you:

- Eat three meals every day - breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- Add mid meal snacks if hungry.
- Eating regular meals helps you to:
 - include all the nutrients and energy you need
 - regulate your metabolic rate and manage your weight
 - prevent you getting overly hungry and tempted by poor food choices, overeating or picking later in the day.
- Check your portion size. Have enough to make you comfortably full, not overfull. Base your meals on the 'healthy plate', with a large serve of vegetables or salad to fill you while keeping the calories down.



Whole Foods Dietitian

- Think of some foods as 'occasional' foods. These are foods that are high in added fats or sugar but low in nutrition. The average Australian gets nearly 40 per cent of their calories from 'discretionary foods' such as fast foods, potato chips, chocolate, biscuits, cakes, pastries, sweet muffins and sweet drinks. Small amounts of these are okay for most of us but large amounts can take the place of more nourishing foods. These foods are high in energy (calories or kilojoules) and are very easy to overeat, contributing to excess weight gain. To reduce the temptation:
 - Plan and prepare regular meals
 - Check your pantry - keep the less healthy snack foods to a minimum or out of sight.
 - If you need something sweet after a meal try stewed fruit or fruit salad with yoghurt or custard.
 - If you need a snack to see you through to the next meal try grainy crisp breads with cheese, a boiled egg, a handful of unsalted nuts, a tub of yoghurt, hummus with carrot sticks.
 - If you're still craving less healthy foods small portions may be enough to satisfy the craving. For example, chocolate cravings might be satisfied by a Freddo Frog or 2 or 3 squares of dark chocolate instead of a larger chocolate bar. A hot chocolate drink may also do the trick.
- Limit sweet drinks such as fruit juice, sports drinks, cordial and soft drinks as these can contain up to 10 teaspoons of sugar per drink (unless 'diet' or 'low-joule'). For more information see the fact sheet *Sugars and fats*.

The fact sheet *Planning meals and snacks* will help you choose foods to help you maintain a healthy pregnancy

For more information

On the Women's website

Healthy eating in pregnancy fact sheets

- Healthy eating when pregnant with twins
- Vegetarian eating in pregnancy
- Exercise in pregnancy
- Planning meals and snacks
- About sugars and fats
- How to monitor your weight gain graphs

Other relevant fact sheets

- Good nutrition in pregnancy
- Good nutrition in breastfeeding
- Nausea and vomiting in pregnancy
- Food safety in pregnancy

www.thewomens.org.au/health-information/fact-sheets