

Diet

1. **Read the article.**
2. **Based on the information given, sort the “Food Guide Pyramid” and put the correct amount of items needed each day in the different categories. Return the food pictures to the envelope!**
3. **Cut out at least one thing from provided magazines that would be considered a healthy, nutritious food and put it on the poster to form a collage.**

Good Nutrition During Pregnancy

It is recommended that no pregnant woman consume less than 1800-2000 calories per day regardless of her size and level of activity. One way for everyone to maintain a good diet containing all of the essential nutrients is to base the diet on recommended servings from the four food groups. The largest increases in the various nutrients which are needed by the pregnant woman are in calcium, iron, and protein. Provided that the pregnant woman has been eating a good diet before pregnancy, she will only need to increase her intake by taking two extra servings of milk which will provide the necessary calcium as well as extra protein and riboflavin and one extra serving of meat or fish which will provide extra protein, thiamin, niacin and some iron. These extra servings also provide the necessary increase in calories during pregnancy.

What should I eat?

What you eat feeds your baby, so choose healthy foods and skip the junk. You need about 300 extra calories each day. Be sure to include the following in your daily diet:

- 4 servings of milk or dairy products
- 4-5 servings of vegetables
- 3 servings of fruit
- 9 servings of breads, cereals, rice or pasta
- 2 to 3 servings of meat, fish, poultry, dried beans, eggs or nuts
- At least 6 to 8 glasses of liquids

You can get all the nutrients you need through what you eat. But your doctor may suggest taking prenatal mineral and vitamin pills that include iron to help protect you against anemia, calcium to help keep your bones strong and folic acid, especially early in pregnancy (even before you get pregnant), to help prevent neural tube defects (serious problems with the brain and spinal cord).

Poor Nutrition During Pregnancy

Unsatisfactory nutrition in the United States is by no means confined to poor people. There are many people (both pregnant women as well as others) with plenty of money who don't eat the foods they need in the proper quantities. One reason for this is simple ignorance. Another is the great popularity of various "fad" diets, particularly those which are supposed to make women slim and attractive. The result is that many women (including those from prosperous families) enter pregnancy in a state of substandard health and vigor. Since they have poor nutritional reserves and bad eating habits, their condition is likely to get worse as the pregnancy advances. This is particularly true of teenage girls and young women whose diets have been found to be low in protein, iron, and Vitamins A, C, and some of the "B" vitamins.

This is extremely unfortunate because, as we have noted, underweight and low weight gain for the mother-to-be are associated with an unsatisfactory outcome of the pregnancy. The bad results may be evident both in the woman and in the baby she is carrying.

Two major problems for woman are anemia (deficiency in red blood cells, usually of iron) and toxemia (characterized by high blood pressure, swelling of the ankles and legs, and changes in kidney function) during pregnancy. The consequences of a poor diet for her baby are:

Stillbirths are more common.

The infant may be below normal weight and fail to thrive.

Infant mortality is greater.

The infant is more prone to infections.

The infant may be anemic.

Copyright © 2001 by the American Academy of Family Physicians.

Permission is granted to print and photocopy this material for nonprofit educational uses.