



# MDwise

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## Pregnancy: Healthy Weight Gain

### Table of Contents

- Overview
- Credits

### Overview

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During pregnancy, lots of women wonder about how their body will change and how much weight they will gain. Maybe this is something that you've been thinking about too.

Weight gain is healthy and normal when you're pregnant. And there's no fixed number of pounds that you should be aiming for. Instead, there's a range of weight gain that's good for you and your baby.

**Ask your doctor what your range is for healthy weight gain.** It's based on your health, your pregnancy, and your weight before pregnancy.

If you're worried about weight gain during pregnancy, try not to focus too much on the numbers. Think more about having a healthy pregnancy by being active and feeding your baby with healthy foods.

### Why does weight gain during pregnancy matter?

Gaining too much or too little weight raises some health risks for you and your baby.

**Gaining too much weight when you're pregnant** can raise your risk of having a large baby. If your newborn is 10 lb (5 kg) or larger, you may be more likely to have:

- A long labor and birth.
- Cesarean birth.
- An injury to you or your baby during childbirth.
- A poor supply of oxygen for your baby during labor.

Also, a newborn who is 10 lb (5 kg) or larger may become overweight or obese later in life. That could mean that he or she will have a higher risk of type 2 diabetes.

Gaining too much weight during pregnancy can also make it harder to lose that weight later on.

And if you are very overweight (obese) during pregnancy, you have greater risks for:

- Pregnancy problems, such as high blood pressure, gestational diabetes, or preeclampsia.
- Cesarean birth and a higher risk of problems from it.
- Miscarriage or stillbirth.

- Having a baby with a birth defect, such as a heart defect or neural tube defects.

**Gaining too little weight when you're pregnant** raises your baby's risks for early birth, and for low birth weight and size. When this happens, a newborn is at greater risk for:

- Illness in the first weeks of life.
- Physical and mental disabilities.
- Long-term health problems later in life.

## What about dieting during pregnancy?

Pregnancy is not the time to diet. Your baby needs you to eat a wide variety of foods. Focus on eating a lot of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and low-fat dairy and meats. Stay away from sugars and fats as much as you can.

**If you have morning sickness and lose weight** during your first trimester, your baby is unlikely to be affected. Just be sure your doctor knows. Get help with nausea and vomiting, if needed.

## How much weight gain is good for you and your baby?

Based on your weight before pregnancy, experts say it is generally best to gain about:

- 28 lb (13 kg) to 40 lb (18 kg) if you are underweight.
- 25 lb (11 kg) to 35 lb (16 kg) if you are at a healthy weight.
- 15 lb (7 kg) to 25 lb (11 kg) if you are overweight.
- 11 lb (5 kg) to 20 lb (9 kg) if you are obese. In some cases, a doctor may recommend that a woman not gain any weight.

Ideally, you will gain weight slowly over your whole pregnancy. If you stop gaining weight for more than 2 weeks, or if you gain weight faster than expected, talk to your doctor.

## How much can you eat during pregnancy?

Although pregnant women often joke that they're "eating for two," you don't need to eat twice as much food.

In general, pregnant women in their second trimester need to eat about 340 extra calories a day. Women in their third trimester need to eat about 450 extra calories a day.<sup>1</sup> You can get about 340 calories in a peanut butter sandwich. Having a cup of 1% milk with a peanut butter sandwich is about 450 calories.

How much you can eat depends on:

- How much you weigh when you get pregnant.
- Your body mass index (BMI).
- How active you are.

Work with your doctor or a dietitian to help you plan healthy meals and the right amount of calories for you.

## Credits

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