

Guidelines for healthy eating during pregnancy

- **Enjoy a variety of foods:** Different kinds of food provide different kinds of nutrients. Strive to include a range of foods that supply beneficial nutrients, rather than opting for poor food choices.

Don't overeat: Only one extra snack is needed each day to meet the extra energy needs of pregnancy.

Care must be taken that foods are not contaminated with harmful germs or heavy metals like mercury, so know what you're eating and where it comes from.

- **Make starchy foods the basis of most meals:** Fortified starchy foods (maize meal, bread flour and bread made from bread flour) contain vitamins and minerals that are beneficial before and during pregnancy. These foods are good choices for women planning families and who are pregnant.
- **Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits every day:** This is especially important for pregnant women. Good choices of vegetables and fruit are those that supply vitamin A and vitamin C to the body. Vitamin A is important when cells in the body are multiplying, as in pregnancy, while Vitamin C helps the absorption of iron from foods and supplements. Vegetables and fruit are the best source of vitamin C.
- **Eat dry beans, lentils, split peas and soya regularly:** These foods are always useful for good health but are especially helpful during pregnancy as they provide many important nutrients, help to keep blood sugar levels constant and help prevent constipation.
- **Eat chicken, fish, milk, meat or eggs daily:** Eat lean meat, remove fat from chicken and use low fat cooking methods. These foods can make a useful contribution to nutrient intake during pregnancy.
- **Use fats sparingly:** People who eat a lot of fat and foods with a lot of fat are more likely to gain too much weight, which is dangerous during pregnancy. Pregnant women should use foods high in fat sparingly and should use good fats such as cooking oil made from plants (sunflower, canola), tub margarine, avocado, peanuts and peanut butter in small amounts.
- **Use salt sparingly and make sure it is iodated:** Use very little salt during cooking and do not add extra salt to food before you eat. Some seasonings and certain foods are high in salt; these should also be used sparingly.
- **Drink lots of clean, safe water:** Water is the best choice of drink, and can be enjoyed on its own or in other drinks made with water, such as tea. Pregnant women may not want to drink lots of water as they feel they must go to the toilet often, but water remains important for their health during pregnancy and breastfeeding.