



EATING WELL DURING PREGNANCY FOR YOU AND YOUR BABY

Adequate nutrition for teenage mothers is vital. Pregnant teens must provide nutrients for the baby, as well as for their developing bodies. A proper diet during pregnancy ensures that the baby will grow appropriately; be of a healthy weight at birth have a lower risk of birth defects. Emphasizing increased vitamin and nutrient intake through a well-balanced diet and supplementation increases the likelihood that the mother will deliver a healthy baby.

FAST FACTS

A pregnant teenager should:

- Gain 25-35 lbs. if she is a healthy weight pre-pregnancy; if she is underweight pre-pregnancy, she should gain 28-40 lbs, and if overweight, 15-20 lbs¹.
- Eat folic acid before and during pregnancy to lower the risk of having a baby with birth defects. Foods such as broccoli, fortified orange juice, spinach, and liver are high in folic acid¹.
- Eat plenty of calcium because her bones are still growing. Calcium is easily obtained from milk, yogurt, cheese, calcium fortified fruit juice, and ice cream¹.
- She can obtain calcium from greens, fortified soy milk products, lactose-free dairy products, and broccoli if she is lactose intolerant¹.

Many health problems associated with teenage pregnancy can be avoided by eating nutritious, well-balanced meals.

- Decrease sugar intake by stopping or reducing soda consumption to reduce the risk of gestational diabetes¹.
- Increase dietary fiber intake by eating whole grain breads and cereals¹.
- Consume an additional 300 calories a day. This is equal to about one cup of cold cereal with one cup of skim milk, and one orange².
- Drink 8-10 glasses of water each day to aid in bowel function¹.
- Eat foods rich in iron, such as red meat, beans, and some green, leafy vegetables, to prevent anemia. Anemia is caused by low levels of oxygen in the blood. Consuming iron fortified foods or taking a daily supplement are also options¹.
- Rest their hard-working bodies. Working too hard may prevent the baby from growing adequately³.

A pregnant teenager should not:

- Drink alcohol, use drugs, or smoke cigarettes because doing so will increase the risks of fetal alcohol syndrome, low birth weight, and premature birth.

- Eat uncooked seafood or raw meat, such as beef, poultry, or sushi. These foods may cause dangerous bacterial infections for the mother and the baby⁵.
- Begin a rigorous exercise plan. Exercising to the point of breathlessness is a signal that the teenager and the baby are not getting enough oxygen⁴.

PROVEN EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS

Great Beginnings:

<http://extension.unh.edu/FoodNutr/Docs/GBbroch.pdf>

Developed at the University of New Hampshire's Cooperative Extension program, Great Beginnings is a nutrition curriculum consisting of presentations, discussions and hands-on activities that are designed to meet the unique needs of its teen audience.

North Carolina Expanded Food and Nutritional Education Program (NC EFNEP):

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/EFNEP/pt.html>

NC EFNEP designed for pregnant and parenting teens teaches participants to use new knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors to provide nutritionally sound diets for themselves and their growing babies through hands-on curriculum, small groups, and individual training.

RESOURCES

Healthy Teen Network: www.healthyteennetwork.org

Women, Infants, and Children (WIC): www.fns.usda.gov/wic

Food and Nutrition Services (FNS): www.fns.usda.gov

American Dietetic Association: www.eatright.org

REFERENCES

¹James, E., Knopf, M., & Canova, K. (Eds.). (2004). *Yes you can: Eat well, look good, and save money*. Washington DC: National Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Parenting and Prevention, Inc.

²Baylor College of Medicine, USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center. (2004). Consumer news – facts and answers: Overweight women tend to retain excess weight after pregnancy. Retrieved January 29, 2007 from <http://www.kidnutrition.org/consumer/archives/excessweight.htm>

³Child Survival Collaborations and Resources (CORE) and Nutrition Working Group and LINKAGES: Breastfeeding, LAM, Related Complementary Feeding, and Maternal Nutrition Program. (2004, August). Maternal nutrition during pregnancy and lactation. Retrieved January 29, 2007 from www.aed.org/upload/MaternalNutritionDietaryGuide.pdf

⁴American Pregnancy Association (2006, July). Exercise guidelines during pregnancy. Retrieved February 2, 2007 from <http://www.americanpregnancy.org/pregnancyhealth/exerciseguidelines.html>

⁵American Pregnancy Association (2006, July). Foods to avoid during pregnancy. Retrieved February 2, 2007 from <http://www.americanpregnancy.org/pregnancyhealth/foodstoavoid.html>.