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# Nutrition during Pregnancy



## Nutrition during Pregnancy

Health and nutrition are two issues high up on our agenda at SPAR. We are strong believers in the need to provide consumers with good quality products and the relevant nutritional information to ensure a balanced, healthy diet. Therefore we've highlighted the nutritious value of various foods that are better choices!

When it comes to nutrition, it's important to go back to basics and consider how your body needs to function, and the role that food plays in helping it to function well. We need nutrients from food to help our body with basic processes such as brain function, keeping muscle strength, good digestion and feeling well.

By taking in the correct balance of nutrients, we can improve energy levels and prevent short-term illness such as colds and flu. We can also help prevent long-term illnesses such as digestive disorders, heart disease and some types of cancer.

Because of time pressures, it may not always be possible to eat a perfectly balanced diet, but by making small and positive changes every day, it is possible to improve your wellbeing!

**TIP!**

Plan your meals and shopping list on a Sunday, for the week ahead.

A nutritious diet is important before, during and after pregnancy, when breastfeeding. It's important to know which foods to choose and also which foods should be avoided for safety. Some nutrients are needed in higher amounts to assist the growth of tissue for you and your baby:

## PROTEIN

Protein is important for the growth of new tissue and bones for your baby as well as the maintenance of your muscles and bones. Good Sources of protein include:

- Red meat, pork, poultry and fish. Choose lean sources and low fat cooking methods
- Low fat dairy products
- Eggs
- Unsalted nuts and peanut butter
- Beans, lentils, chickpeas, soya products, tofu

**TIP!** Eat protein with each meal

## CALCIUM

Calcium is needed to maintain the strength of teeth and bones. If insufficient calcium is consumed, your body will take calcium from your bone stores to aid your baby's development. If you are vegan, speak to a nutritionist about eating sufficient amounts of other calcium-rich foods and calcium supplementation. Good Sources of calcium include:

- Milk, yoghurt, cheese
- Dark green leafy vegetables and broccoli
- Almonds and almond milk
- Tinned fish containing bones i.e. sardines, pilchards, salmon
- Dairy-free alternatives including fortified soya, rice milks and yoghurts

**TIP!** To balance your own intake, choose three portions of dairy products during the day.

## FOLATE/FOLIC ACID (VITAMIN B9)

Folate/Folic acid (Vitamin B9) is an important nutrient that promotes the growth of tissue. A low intake of folate can result in spinal defects in the developing foetus. It is best to start taking a folic acid supplement before pregnancy, but if this is not possible, start taking it as soon as you discover you are pregnant. Aside from eating natural sources, a supplement of between 400-800 micrograms of folic acid per day is recommended. Good Sources of this nutrient include:

- Spinach, kale, lettuce, cabbage, okra, brussel sprouts, broccoli, asparagus, peas
- Avocado and beetroot
- Split peas, beans and lentils

## IRON

Iron from food helps form red blood cells, transport oxygen in the body and is important for the normal function of the immune system. It also helps reduce tiredness and fatigue. Vegetarians should eat more of the non-meat sources of iron, and if feeling extremely tired, discuss supplementation with a health professional. Good Sources of iron include:

- Red meat, pork, poultry
- Egg yolk
- Spinach and other dark green vegetables
- Seeds, dried beans
- Dried fruit

## VITAMIN C

Vitamin C helps the immune system to function normally and also increases the absorption of iron (when eaten together with foods containing iron). Include Vitamin C-rich foods in your diet every day:

- Citrus fruit, guavas, pineapple, strawberries, kiwi fruit, cantaloupe melon
- Tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower

## FATS

Nutritious sources of fats are essential in the diet. Sources include:

- Olives and olive oil
- Avocado
- Seeds including pumpkin, sunflower, sesame and flax seeds
- Small amounts of butter or ghee



Certain discomforts may occur during pregnancy. Help alleviate these by making the following changes:

## NAUSEA

Nausea is fairly common in the early stages of pregnancy. If this occurs, try eating smaller meals and snacks during the day. It may also be helpful to try a nutritious meal replacement drink. It may also help to eat a slice of plain toasted bread or biscuits in the morning. If vomiting occurs, it is important to stay hydrated – and apple juice, herbal or fresh ginger tea may help. If vomiting occurs frequently, discuss this with your clinic nurse or doctor.

## HEARTBURN

Heartburn is also common because of the pressure placed on the stomach during pregnancy. Chewing slowly and eating smaller meals may help. It may also help to avoid spicy foods, or to drink a small glass of milk. If heartburn is severe, discuss taking a suitable antacid with your doctor.

## CONSTIPATION

Constipation can also be common, especially in the latter stages of pregnancy. Eating foods that contain dietary fibre is beneficial, as long as sufficient fluid is also consumed. You need a total of 2 litres of different fluids per day, choose herbal tea, diluted 100% fruit juice, or water. Good Sources of fibre include:

- All vegetables and fruit. Aim for 2 fruits and 3 vegetables/salad ingredients per day
- Oats, whole grains like brown rice, wild rice, quinoa, barley, rye, corn and popcorn
- Sweet potatoes, baby potatoes eaten with the skin
- Seeds and bread containing bran and seeds



## PRECAUTIONS

It is also important to take precautions to prevent any food poisoning during pregnancy. These useful tips may come in handy:

- Wash your hands before preparing food
- Use clean utensils and chopping boards to prepare food
- Wash all fresh fruit and vegetables thoroughly. If vegetables still have soil on them, wash in salted water first and then fresh water
- Cook foods thoroughly, especially meat and eggs
- Drink clean, safe water. If you are unsure about the source of your water, it's best to boil it and allow it to cool before drinking
- Avoid foods from markets or restaurants that do not follow good hygiene practices or where food is kept in the open or at an incorrect temperature

## FOOD SAFETY

For safety reasons there are also some foods that are best avoided during pregnancy:

- Raw eggs
- Raw fish/sushi and undercooked meat or poultry
- Unpasteurized milk
- Raw sprouts
- Soft cheese like camembert, brie, roquefort (unless these are cooked or baked thoroughly)
- Alcohol
- Energy drinks
- Excessive caffeine found in tea, coffee and cocoa products. It's best to limit caffeine intake to one cup of weak coffee per day
- Avoid excessive intake of sugary and sugary drinks because this may affect your blood sugar.



# BETTER CHOICES

*Eat well, Live better*

For more information about how healthy eating can benefit your lifestyle or the lifestyle of your close ones, feel free to take on of our other leaflets! You can inspire small and positive changes everyday!

SPAR recognises that all consumers' have different dietary needs. Please consult a health professional if you have any specific health concerns or need specific dietary guidance.

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