

# Nutrition

## Pregnancy nutrition tips

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### 1. Eat a balanced diet

The most basic thing you can do to ensure that you have a successful pregnancy is to ensure that your diet is balanced. A well-balanced diet should include the following foods:

- Fresh fruit and vegetables, especially dark green and yellow ones, to boost beta-carotene or vitamin A intake and those that are good sources of vitamin C

Examples:

Vitamin A or beta-carotene: carrots, pumpkin, sweet potato, butternut, broccoli, yellow peaches, paw-paw, and mangoes

Vitamin C: oranges, grapefruit, naartjies, lemons, guavas, strawberries, kiwi fruit, paw-paw, mangoes, the cabbage family, sweet green peppers

- Unprocessed bread, cereals and grains to ensure that you get sufficient B-vitamins and dietary fibre to keep you regular

Examples: high-fibre breakfast cereals, brown or wholewheat bread and rolls, maize meal or oats porridge, brown rice, pasta

- Milk and dairy products to provide you with the large amount of calcium you need to build the baby's bones and teeth, plus protein and riboflavin

Examples: whole or low-fat or skimmed milk, yoghurt, cottage cheese, other cheeses and maas (South African sour milk beverage) - use the low-fat varieties if you are scared of gaining weight

- Lean meat, poultry, fish and eggs to provide body-building protein, iron and vitamin B12 for a healthy blood supply and essential fatty acids (found in fish and omega-3 enriched eggs)

- Fats and oils for energy and essential fatty acids - use sparingly if you are trying to control weight gain, and remember that soft tub margarines, which are rich in polyunsaturated fatty acids, and olive oil which is one of the richest sources of monounsaturated fatty acids, are your best options

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### 2. Eat regular meals

Eating regular meals during pregnancy is one way of ensuring that you feel well and don't get the blues from low blood sugar. If you can't face breakfast right away during the first three months of pregnancy when mothers are often plagued by nausea, then nibble a dry biscuit or suck a slice of lemon or ice cubes when you wake to dispel the nausea. When you are feeling better, eat a light breakfast of fruit and cereal with yoghurt.

Dividing your food intake into six small meals a day is also a good way of combating nausea, preventing bloatedness and ensuring a good nutrient intake.

Having a glass of milk at night with a wholewheat biscuit can help you fall asleep because milk is rich in tryptophan, an amino acid that promotes sleep.

### 3. Drink plenty of liquids

Drinking plenty of liquids, especially pure water, is an excellent way of helping your body flush out breakdown products through the skin, kidneys and bowels. Remember you are doing double cleansing duty while you are pregnant.

You will be doing yourself and your baby a good turn if you have a high intake of liquids, but avoid gassy cold drinks, especially artificially sweetened ones. Cold drinks, which contain gas, can make you feel nauseous. Until more research has been done on the possible effect of artificial sweeteners on foetal development, it is a good idea to avoid these products during pregnancy.

In general, the piped water supply in South Africa is safe, but if you live in areas where the water is suspect, boil water you intend to drink and cool it before using it. The use of water filters is also a possibility if you can afford one.

Drink six glasses of water every day and also make a point of having fruit juices (freshly squeezed ones are the best), rooibos tea and milk to supplement your liquid intake.

Go easy on beverages that contain caffeine such as coffee, Ceylon tea and cola drinks. Research has shown that mothers who drink strong coffee have smaller babies than those who don't. There are plenty of nutritious drinks for expectant moms to use without them having to overload their unborn baby with excessive caffeine. " (Dr I V van Heerden)