

Eating For Two!!

Can I really eat twice as much now that I'm pregnant?

The short answer is: No. So much for that old wives' tale. Although you may be sorely tempted to eat for two — especially during those early ravenous days — you have no medical reason to do so. Your body becomes more efficient during pregnancy and is able to absorb more of the nutrients you eat. So consuming twice as much doesn't double your chances of having a healthy baby — instead, it's likely to mean excessive weight gain for you. In fact, you need only 300 or so extra calories a day when you're pregnant, fewer during your first trimester. That's about the number of calories found in two and a half cups of low-fat milk or a tuna sandwich. So think in terms of a smart snack, such as a glass of orange juice and a couple of slices of whole-wheat toast, to boost your calories during your pregnancy.

What foods do I need more of?

To meet your additional daily need for protein, calories, and key vitamins and minerals, health experts advise pregnant women to eat a variety of foods. These basics will get you started:

- nine or more servings of breads, cereals, and grains (at least four should be whole grain)
- seven or more servings of fruits and vegetables (at least one rich in vitamin C and one in vitamin A)
- at least three servings of milk and milk products
- at least three servings of protein — lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, nuts — and dried beans or peas

That sounds like a lot of food, but realize that a "serving" tends to be smaller than you might think. For example, one slice of bread equals one serving for the bread and grains category, a half-cup of cottage cheese or one slice of cheese equals a dairy serving, and a protein serving is one egg or a piece of meat about the size of a deck of cards.

Choosing several different-colored fruits and vegetables each day will help you get the variety of nutrients you need. Opt for foods as close to their natural state as possible to maximize your chances of eating well: Pick whole-grain bread or brown rice over refined white bread or white rice and fresh fruits over canned fruits in sugar syrup. Eat fats, oils, and sweets sparingly.

Do these food guidelines ever not apply?

There are six exceptions to the recommended pregnancy food formula. Each mom-to-be should talk with her healthcare practitioner about her particular nutritional needs:

- the overweight woman, who — with professional guidance — may do better with fewer calories
- the significantly underweight woman, who will almost certainly need to eat more
- the teenager, who is still growing and has greater-than-average nutritional requirements herself
- the expectant mother of multiples, who will have extra food needs for each baby
- the diabetic mother-to-be, who will need to closely monitor her blood sugar levels
- the woman who develops gestational diabetes during her pregnancy, who will also need to closely monitor her blood sugar levels

I
n a nutshell: Your baby's health and growth is directly related to what you eat before and during your pregnancy. And remember
---- you're eating for a **baby**, not another full-sized adult.