

Pregnancy concerns and diet solutions

Pregnancy is exciting, exhilarating and totally different for every woman. Below is a list of some common pregnancy concerns plus some positive action steps you can take that might help make your pregnancy all it can be.

Cravings Though no one really knows why they occur, countless mums have had them, for everything from watermelon and chocolate to chilli sauce on ice cream. Action steps for when you have a craving: Don't judge them – they are a normal part of pregnancy! Keep your portions reasonable and maintain an otherwise healthy diet.

Morning sickness Nausea and vomiting are the plight of many mums-to-be, especially in the first trimester. The cause is unknown and may be due to hormonal changes or lower blood sugar during early pregnancy. As the name suggests, it often occurs in the morning but can strike at any time of the day! Tips to put into action to help manage morning sickness: Eat frequent, small meals. Think nutritious foods but in a snack-portion size. Your sense of smell may be heightened when pregnant, so avoid potential triggers like food with strong aromas, perfume and cigarette smoke. Go for mild flavours over spicy. Have a small snack at bedtime and upon waking, such as dry toast, crackers or fruit. Take your pregnancy vitamins with or after food. For severe nausea, talk to your doctor.

Constipation Pregnancy hormones relax your intestinal muscles and slow the movement of food through your intestine. Your baby is also putting pressure on your intestines, slowing down the process even more. Act on these simple remedies that may help to get things moving again: Drink plenty of fluids every day including water, decaffeinated tea, prune juice, milk and soups. Vegetables and fruits with lots of moisture – like celery, berries and watermelon – can also help. Eat more fibre-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Be more active – exercise, such as regular walks, can help keep food moving!

Heavy legs, swelling and cramps Cramps are very common during pregnancy however it is not known what exactly causes this. A feeling of heavy legs, pins and needles oedema (severely swollen ankles) results from extra fluid in the tissues of your body. If you have these symptoms there is no harm in talking to your doctor about them and to adopt some good habits. Tips: To combat cramps, massage the affected area to provide some relief. Stretching may also help with pain relief. Wear comfortable shoes to help with swollen feet or ankles. Put your feet up whenever you can. Try to keep them elevated above the level of your heart. Sleep with your legs slightly raised (using a pillow). This will help circulation. You may need to wear support stockings (your doctor can provide you with a prescription or recommendation). If the swelling is concerning you, discuss with your doctor.

Heartburn Heartburn – a burning sensation in the middle of your chest – can occur because your baby's weight is pushing on your stomach and intestines. Because stomach acids are squeezed into the oesophagus and the muscle at the top of the oesophagus relaxes, it creates the uncomfortable burning sensation we know as heartburn. See if these dietary changes act to ease your heartburn: Eat smaller meals more frequently and eat slowly. Avoid greasy and spicy foods. Try to wait at least an hour after you eat before lying down. Check with your doctor before taking any over-the-counter antacids or tablets.

Being vegetarian Vegetarian and vegan diets are safe during pregnancy only if they're well planned with high-quality proteins and a good balance of whole grains, fruit, vegetables and healthy fats. Follow-up with these additional action steps: Ask your doctor for a pregnancy supplement containing Vitamin B12, Vitamin D, Folic Acid, Iron, Calcium and Zinc to add nutrients that might be missing from your diet. Let your obstetrician know if you are (or are planning to become) vegetarian or vegan.

High blood pressure Gestational hypertension (high blood pressure that occurs during pregnancy) requires the attention of your healthcare professional. Before becoming pregnant: Try and make some small lifestyle changes, including limiting salt intake, staying active and looking to reduce your weight if overweight. Throughout your pregnancy: Try to keep to the proper rate of weight gain. Avoid alcohol and tobacco. Tell your healthcare professional if you're taking any over-the-counter or prescription medications and get regular check-ups. Having more than one: Having twins or other multiples means needing more kilojoules. To find out what your energy and nutrient requirements will be: Ask your healthcare professional because energy requirements may differ if you started pregnancy under- or overweight.

Some rules for food safety in pregnancy



Keep it cold

- Shop with a cooler bag
- Put any food that needs to be kept cold directly in the fridge
- Only eat chilled foods if they have come straight from the fridge
- Defrost and marinate food in the fridge, especially meats



Keep it hot

- Cook/reheat foods until they're steaming hot
- Make sure there's no pink left in cooked meats/fish
- Look for clear juices before eating freshly cooked chicken or pork
- Heat to boiling all marinades containing raw meat juices before serving



Keep it clean

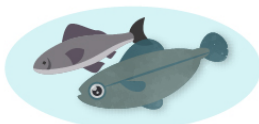
- Wash and dry hands thoroughly before starting to prepare or eat any food, even a snack
- Separate raw and cooked food and use different cutting boards and knives for each
- Don't let raw meat juices drip onto other foods



Check the label

- Use food within the use-by-date
- Follow storage and cooking instructions
- Ask for information about unpackaged foods, e.g ready-to-eat salads

Foods to avoid in pregnancy



Fish

- Raw or uncooked fish/seafood (e.g sushi, sashimi)
- Seafood high in mercury (king mackerel, tilefish, swordfish)
- Smoked fish/seafish
- Ready-to-eat chilled prawns



Meat

- Raw or uncooked meat, poultry and eggs
- Ready-to-eat cold processed meats (e.g ham, salami, luncheon meats)
- Refrigerated pâté and meat spreads
- Chicken stuffing



Dairy products

- Raw & unpasteurised milk/dairy products
- Soft and semi-soft cheeses (camembert, brie, blue cheese)
- Soft-serve ice cream



Fruits/vegetables

- Unwashed fruits and vegetables
- Pre-prepared or pre-packaged salad mixes, including fruit salad
- Raw or lightly cooked bean sprouts (alfalfa sprouts, broccoli sprouts, mung beans, soybean sprouts)