

Diet and Lifestyle Changes for Fertility, Pregnancy, and Breastfeeding

The following recommendations are helpful for promoting fertility and a healthy pregnancy. Use these diet and lifestyle approaches when you are planning to become pregnant or if you are already pregnant or breastfeeding.

1. Start with a 30-Day Paleo Reset

- Eliminate vegetable oils, gluten, grains, soy, sugar, and processed foods
- Emphasize whole foods like meat, eggs, vegetables, fruit, nuts, and seeds
- Do not restrict food intake; eat to satisfaction at all meals

2. Sleep seven to nine hours per night

- Sleep needs to be a priority before you plan to conceive
- Light exposure during day and darkness at night will help keep your hormones normal
- Aim for seven to nine hours per night of high-quality sleep

3. Avoid very-low-carb or low-fat diets (unless you have a specific medical reason to follow one)

- Both carbohydrates and fat are important for promoting fertility
- Don't drop below 20 percent of calories from either of these macronutrients
- Consider increasing carbohydrate intake if struggling with fertility or poor breast milk production on a low-carb diet

4. Eat one pound of fatty fish per week

- Omega-3 fats from fatty fish, including DHA and EPA, are essential for optimal brain development in baby
- Fatty fish include: salmon, sardines, tuna, trout, mackerel, herring, whitefish, sturgeon
- Limit tuna to one to two times per week when pregnant

5. Eat plenty of calories

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- Calorie needs increase by the following amounts during each stage of childbirth:
- No increase in first trimester
- Second Trimester: 200–300 calories more per day
- Third Trimester: 400–500 calories more per day
- Multiples: Add 300 calories per day extra for each baby
- Breastfeeding: 300–500 calories per day extra when nursing exclusively

6. Eat foods rich in fat-soluble vitamins

- Vitamins A, D, and K2 are important for fertility and a healthy pregnancy
- Vitamin A-rich foods include: liver, egg yolks, cod liver oil, grass fed dairy, kidney
- Vitamin D can be normalized from daily sun exposure (half the time it takes your skin to turn pink) or through cod liver oil supplementation
- Vitamin K2-rich foods include: poultry liver, grass-fed dairy, fermented soybeans (natto)

7. Exercise appropriately

- Both too little and too much exercise can affect fertility as well as the risk of gestational diabetes during pregnancy
- Aim for a mix of cardio and resistance exercises (e.g., walking/jogging and weight lifting) three to five days per week
- Avoid over-exercising, which is a source of stress and can cause hormonal imbalances and infertility

8. Reduce stress

- Stress can significantly impact fertility
- Commit to regular (even daily) stress management practices such as meditation, deep breathing, yoga, journaling, etc.

9. Gain appropriate weight during pregnancy

- Weight gain recommendations depend on your BMI prior to conception
- Normal BMI (18.5–24.9) – 25 to 35 pounds total
- Overweight (25–29.9) – 15 to 25 pounds total
- Obese (30+) – 11 to 20 pounds total
- Underweight (<18.5) 28 to 40 pounds total

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10. Consider a prenatal multivitamin

- Ask your healthcare provider for a prenatal multivitamin recommendation
- Make sure there's a minimum of 400 mcg folate (not folic acid) in the multi
- Take with food to avoid nausea