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Healthy Weight Gain During Pregnancy

Gaining the right amount of weight brings benefits for both mother and baby.

Too much weight gain during pregnancy may cause:

- Gestational diabetes (high blood sugar)
- High blood pressure and preeclampsia
- Large babies
- Cesarean delivery
- Not returning to prepregnancy weight after delivery
- Becoming overweight after pregnancy
- Risk of baby becoming overweight as a child

How much weight should I gain?

The amount of weight you need to gain is based on your body mass index (BMI) before pregnancy. BMI is calculated using your height in kilograms and your weight in meters ($BMI = kg \div (m \times m)$). You can find BMI calculators online.

BMI Before Pregnancy	Total Weight Gain in 1st Trimester	Per Week Weight Gain in 2nd and 3rd Trimesters	Weight Gain Goal for Entire Pregnancy
Underweight (BMI less than 18.5)	2.2-6.6 lb	1.0-1.3 lb	28-40 lb
Healthy weight (BMI 18.5-24.9)	2.2-6.6 lb	0.8-1.0 lb	25-35 lb
Overweight (BMI 25-29.9)	2.2-6.6 lb	0.5-0.7 lb	15-25 lb
Obesity (BMI more than 30)	0.5-4.4 lb	0.4-0.6 lb	11-20 lb

Source: Institute of Medicine. *Weight Gain During Pregnancy: Reexamining the Guidelines*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press; 2009.

These recommendations are based on having 1 baby, not twins or triplets, etc. Be sure to ask your healthcare provider how much weight they suggest you gain.

What's a healthy plan for weight gain?

- Eat nutritious foods like fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy products, lean proteins, and whole grains.
- Aim for just 300 calories more per day in the second or third trimesters — you do not need to “eat for two.”
- Limit high-calorie, high-fat, and high-sugar foods, such as fast foods and sugar-sweetened beverages.

How does exercise help me during pregnancy?

- Can relieve symptoms like backaches, constipation, bloating, and swelling.
- Can make delivery of your baby easier.
- Follow the advice of your healthcare provider about exercise during pregnancy. Unless you are told not to exercise:
 - Make a plan for when you are going to exercise.
 - Do things you enjoy.
 - Start slowly. Work up to 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.
 - Test to see if you are exercising at a healthy level by talking while exercising. If your voice begins to slow or you become out of breath, you may be exercising too hard.
- Aerobic exercise (exercise that focuses on your heart and lungs) is a great option. Some examples are:
 - Brisk walking. Three 10-minute walks throughout the day is one way to walk for 30 minutes.
 - Swimming or water aerobics.
 - Riding a stationary bike.

Also important for a healthy pregnancy:

- Not drinking alcohol, smoking, or taking drugs.
- Taking prenatal vitamins every day.
- Going to all pre- and postnatal visits.
- Managing stress and mood. Make a plan for what to do when you feel stressed out.

Janelle W. Coughlin, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, and Welch Center for Prevention, Epidemiology and Clinical Research, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, USA; Lindsay M. Martin, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland, USA; Taraneh Soleymani, Nutrition Obesity Research Center, Department of Nutrition Sciences, University of Alabama at Birmingham, USA; Daniel H. Bessesen, Department of Endocrinology, Metabolism and Diabetes, School of Medicine, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, Aurora, Colorado, USA.

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