

INFORMATION SHEET

Diet during Pregnancy

expert care for women

When women are pregnant they require more vitamins and minerals. A good diet will help ensure you and your baby are healthy.

What specific dietary requirements are there during pregnancy?

It is important to have a diet which:

- is rich in calcium, folate, iron, niacin, thiamine, vitamin C and zinc;
- is high in fibre and protein, and
- includes two litres of healthy fluids, including water, milk and fruit juice per day.

Should I make any dietary modifications during pregnancy?

A diet rich in folate may help prevent the risk of babies developing neural tube defects. During the first three months of pregnancy and if your pregnancy is planned at least one month before conception taking a folate supplement is recommended.

You should avoid excessive amounts of vitamin A.

Limiting your caffeine intake to 200 mg per day during pregnancy is recommended. This is approximately equal to two cups of coffee, four cups of tea, four cups of hot chocolate or four 375ml cans of cola.

Avoiding alcohol is also recommended. Alcohol can increase your risk of miscarriage and in later pregnancy can cause fetal alcohol syndrome.

If you or your partner smoke, you should consider quitting, as it can affect the health of your baby. It only takes approximately four days for your body to be free of nicotine.

Do women who have diabetes need a specific diet during pregnancy?

Women who have diabetes should have good diabetic control and follow a diet recommended by their doctor. Once a woman with diabetes is pregnant it is important

that she has a diet consistent for a normal healthy pregnancy.

Are there other women who may need special dietary advice during pregnancy?

If you have a vegetarian or vegan diet during pregnancy you will need to ensure that you have an adequate intake of protein. People on vegan diets need to ensure they have enough vitamin B12 to prevent neurological risks to their baby. Please speak with your doctor about your dietary needs.

Women who have an eating disorder, such as anorexia or bulimia are at high risk of nutritional deficiencies which may put the health of their baby at risk. Please speak with your doctor about the best solution for you.

Should I take a multivitamin supplement during pregnancy?

It may be a good idea to take a multivitamin suitable for pregnancy. Taking a folate supplement is certainly recommended. Please speak to your doctor about what supplements you should take.