

Food and pregnancy

Clinique des Grangettes  
Genève

# Food and pregnancy

## Fruits and vegetables

These are rich in vitamin C, in mineral salts, in trace elements and in fibres. Fruits also contain sugar (fructose).

## Milk products

Milk, cheese and yoghurt supply calcium, fats, vitamins A, B, D and proteins.

## Meat, fish, eggs, leguminous (protein) foods

These bring fats, iron, vitamins A and B, proteins. The leguminous foods must be associated with cereals to supply proteins of the same value as other items in this group.

## Fatty foods

Oils, butter, cream, margarine are in the middle of the pyramid, being essential for our organism, but must be taken in moderate quantity. They bring liposoluble vitamins such as A, D, K and fats. Certain oils bring essential fatty acids (polysaturated), which are not made by the body: grape seed oil, sunflower oil, walnut oil, sweetcorn oil, soya bean oil. Olive oil and rapeseed oil (monosaturated) are also very interesting for the vascular system. The simultaneous use of polysaturated and monosaturated oils proves to be the best choice to best cover the needs of our organism. A soup spoon of each group of these oils (i.e. 2 soup spoons per day) and 10g butter is sufficient to cover daily needs.

## Sugary food and alcohol

These are pleasure items, but bring no important nourishment. They are therefore to be consumed in moderation.

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**NB: Lightened or reduced products, skimmed milk, lean cheese, lean yoghurts, contain the same amount of calcium as normal products. Butter and cream do not have calcium. Milk or yoghurts made from soya do not contain calcium, unless this has been added as mentioned on the package.**

## Iron

Nutrient essential for the formation of the red corpuscles of the foetus. As the need is considerably increased, food alone does not cover the daily requirement of 20 to 30mg. It is recommended to take supplements in the form of medicine (please see about this with your doctor). Foods rich in iron are as follows: meats, dried meat, fish, eggs, leguminous food. To increase the absorption of iron, you should take food rich in vitamin C (fruits, fruit juices, vegetables). A large quantity of black tea can reduce the absorption of medicated iron.

## Magnesium

This plays a role in the production and transformation of essential proteins. It prevents premature contractions. A lack of magnesium results in cramps. Foods rich in magnesium are cocoa, oily fruits, unrefined cereals, leguminous foods.

## Folic acid (group B vitamin)

Has a paramount role in the formation of red corpuscles. Present in large quantity in vegetables, green salads, cereal shoots and complete cereals, leguminous foods, as well as in meat and eggs.

## Fluorine and iodine

Needs of these also increase during pregnancy. It is recommended to use salt containing iodine and fluorine (green box).

You are pregnant, and you ask yourself many questions on how you should eat whilst awaiting the happy event. You have already found lots of information in different books; but sometimes the advice is not identical or even completely opposite. We hope that this leaflet will help you to choose good nourishment during your pregnancy.

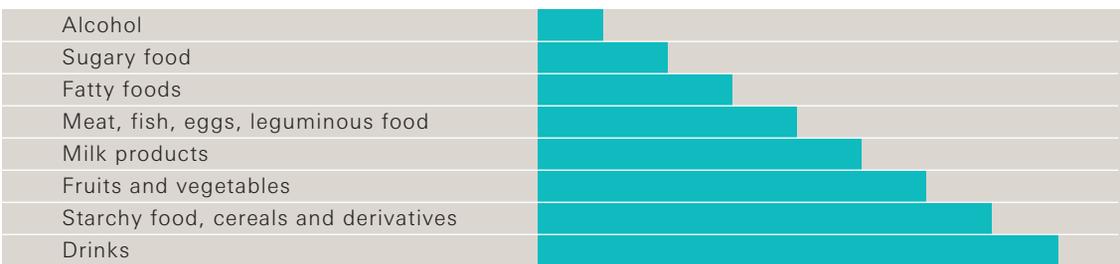
## The food pyramid

### Why is food so important during pregnancy?

During pregnancy, food must cover the needs of the mother and of the foetus, and allow a sufficient but not excessive weight gain for the mother. To live well during these nine months and prepare yourself for breast feeding, you must make reserves of quality. You should eat twice as good, not twice as much! Benefit by this period to acquire a good knowledge of what is balanced nutrition.

### What does a balanced nutrition mean?

Here to reply to this question, is the food pyramid which represents all kinds of food and drink. To feed yourself correctly, all you have to do is to choose generously from items near the base of the pyramid and more moderately from those near the top.



### Drinks

Your requirement of water, non-alcoholic and low sugar drinks is together at least 1.5 litres per day.

### Starchy food, cereals and derivatives

Bread, potatoes, cereals, leguminous food, starch-based pasta, vegetable proteins, group B vitamins, fibres and mineral salts.

During pregnancy, calorific needs are perceptibly more important, protein needs are also higher and requirements for vitamins and mineral salts are markedly increased. This is why a balanced and varied nutrition is highly recommended.

## Important nutriments

### Building foods (proteins)

Eating a small portion of cheese at the end of your midday and evening meals will cover your new protein needs and supply the few extra calories specific to pregnancy.

### Calcium

The requirement for calcium is 1200mg per day. It is vital to the construction of the skeleton of the fœtus and to the formation of teeth. A good coverage of these needs avoids bone demineralisation of the mother, which could manifest itself at menopause by the onset of an ailment called osteoporosis.

### How to satisfy calcium needs

The following portions each bring about 300mg of calcium, and you should therefore choose between 4 portions per day. Preferably space these portions throughout the day in order to optimise the assimilation of the calcium. Take care not to consume too much bran (bran bread, bran flakes), as it restricts the absorption of calcium.

1 portion of 300mg of calcium	25cl of milk
	180g of yoghurt
	30g of hard cheese
	70g of soft cheese
	300g of fromage blanc or serous
	2 cheeses for spreading
	125g of baked custard

## Some problems associated with pregnancy

### **Burning sensations of the stomach (pyrosis)**

These are caused by stomach muscles not closing so well, allowing acidity to rise towards the oesophagus. The sensations are more frequent and painful when the stomach is empty. If you suffer from this problem, take three meals and take snacks during the day, avoiding acidic foods which will increase the burning feeling. Choose also less spicy foods, foods prepared with little fats, and diminish your intake of foods rich in fibres. Avoid gassy drinks. Tea, coffee and alcohol are again not recommended. Avoid lying down soon after a meal.

### **Constipation**

This is often present during pregnancy. The fact of taking extra iron can also perturb the transit. To counter this inconvenience dietetically you should increase your intake of vegetable fibres. Take fruit juices, prunes, increase the amounts of raw and cooked vegetables during your two main meals, also your consumption of fruit. Choose complete cereals (rich in fibres) and drink at least 1.5 litres of liquids.

### **Toxoplasmosis**

Increased attention against toxoplasmosis is also paramount for non-immunised pregnant women. After the birth of the child and even if you are breast-feeding, there is no more risk for your baby. This parasite is found in the muscles of animals and on vegetable matter tainted by the faeces of contaminated animals. You should avoid eating anything prepared with raw meat. Eat only well-cooked meats. Consume only green vegetables and fruits that have been washed thoroughly and/or peeled. Avoid raw vegetables if you have not washed them yourself!

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For a woman of average weight at the beginning of pregnancy, a gain of 9 to 12 kg is natural and necessary. Your weight at the beginning of pregnancy is a determining factor in the evaluation of your increase in weight.

The criteria for weight gain are different if the mother has insufficient or excessive weight at the beginning of pregnancy. Objectives will be fixed at the time by the doctor.

If your weight gain is more important, you should not commence a strict diet, but decrease the consumption of foods rich in fats (assorted delicatessen, sauce dishes), food rich in saccharose (cakes, chocolate) and check cooking methods.

However, you can always ask the advice of our qualified dietician, who will make personalised suggestions.

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