



Weight a minute

Just how many kilos should you gain?

During pregnancy, many women worry that if they eat too much, they will put on too much weight. If they eat too little, they worry that their baby's health is at risk. You need to eat a well-balanced diet to ensure that your baby gets the optimal nutrition needed for good health and growth.

It is important to maintain your weight in the healthy weight gain range, as putting on too much weight in pregnancy increases your risk of developing gestational diabetes (see page 40), pregnancy-induced hypertension (see page 41), a more difficult childbirth and a higher chance of requiring a caesarean section (C-section). It is also more difficult to administer epidural anaesthesia for pain relief in obese mothers during their labour.

Excessive weight gain may also result in large babies that are more likely to become obese and diabetic later in life. Mums who do not shed the excess kilos after childbirth are also more likely to develop diabetes, high blood pressure and heart diseases when they get older.

However, do not embark on a weight loss programme during pregnancy even if you are overweight as it can be dangerous for you and your baby. Make healthy changes in your diet or talk to your doctor if you are worried about your weight.

So, how much should you gain? It depends on your Body Mass Index (BMI) and pre-pregnancy weight. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to pregnancy weight gain, so discuss this with your doctor if you are unsure. The table below will give you a general guide on your healthy weight gain range.

Guidelines for Pregnancy Weight Gain

BMI (Pre-pregnancy)	Recommended Weight Gain (During pregnancy)	Recommended Weight Gain for Twin/Multiple Births
<18.5	12.7 – 18.1kg	Discuss with your obstetrician and/or dietitian
18.5 – 24.9	11.3 – 15.9kg	16.8 – 24.5kg
25.0 – 29.9	6.8 – 11.3kg	14.1 – 22.7kg
≥ 30	5.0 – 9.1kg	11.3 – 19.1kg

* Adopted from Institute of Medicine Guidelines (IOM 2009)

PREGNANCY WEIGHT GAIN CHECKLIST

My pre-pregnancy weight: _____ kg

My height: _____ m

My BMI: $\frac{\text{Weight (kg)}}{\text{Height (m)} \times \text{Height (m)}} = \text{_____ kg/m}^2$

Based on the above, my recommended weight gain range during pregnancy should be _____ kg.

What should I do if I am not gaining enough weight?

Gaining too little weight may cause premature birth or a low birth weight baby (< 2.5kg).

This could be related to your pre-pregnancy weight and diet. This could also mean your baby may not be getting the optimal nutrition he needs for growth. Morning sickness in early pregnancy is common and some women may experience slight weight loss at this time. It is important to ensure adequate hydration and get enough sustenance to tide over this time. Try to have at least three meals a day, with two to three regular snacks in-between. Turn to page 15 for ideas on nutritious snacks and page 37 for tips on managing nausea.

Morning sickness usually improves in the second trimester and this is when weight gain is likely to become more significant. See your doctor if you cannot retain any food or fluid or if you have any concerns about your weight.

What should I do if I am gaining weight too quickly?

Learning to control your weight is important as gaining too much weight during pregnancy can increase your blood pressure and may increase your risk of developing gestational diabetes. It is important to watch what you eat by following a well-balanced diet and limiting your intake of foods high in fat, salt and sugar.

Do not adopt the “eating-for-two” approach and remember to include exercise in your daily routine.

Here is how you can limit your consumption of high-fat food:

- Cut down on creamy cakes, pastries, deep fried foods such as goreng pisang (banana fritters), curry puffs and keropoks (fried crackers). Opt for healthier snack choices instead (see page 15).

- Choose low-fat dairy products (e.g. milk, cheese, yoghurt).
- Trim fat from meat and remove skin from poultry before cooking.
- Use healthier cooking methods such as grilling, steaming, baking or stir-frying, instead of deep-frying.

Reduce sugar intake by:

- Drinking water, not sweetened beverages or fruit juices.
- Limiting chocolates, ice creams, sweets and desserts.

In general, choose foods labeled with the Healthier Choice Symbol or Healthier Snack Symbol as these are usually lower in fat (especially saturated fat), sugar and salt, and higher in fibre compared to other regular products of a similar range.



Pregnant and active

Do not settle for a sedentary lifestyle once you are pregnant. Eat well and stay active. Being physically active has many benefits for you and your baby.

Turn to page 22 for information on suitable exercises during pregnancy.

Did you know...

The greatest amount of weight loss occurs in the first three months after you give birth and continues at a slow and steady rate until six months after birth. You can return to your pre-pregnancy weight relatively quickly once you start breastfeeding as the weight gained during pregnancy is used as fuel to make your breast milk. Healthy eating and physical activity will help you keep weight gain in check during your pregnancy and will also help you shed the excess weight after childbirth.