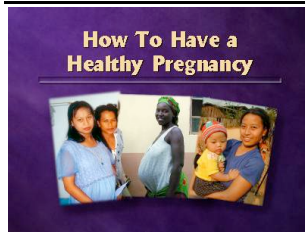


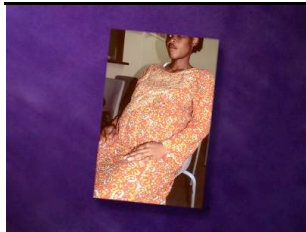
How to Have a Healthy Pregnancy



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God gave women a very special role—the ability to carry in their bodies, the future generations of this world. This is not an easy work. Pregnant women need special care from their partners, families and communities.

Today we will learn how to have a healthy pregnancy.



©Viriato Ferreira

A woman's body changes a lot during pregnancy. Another person is living inside her. She will need more food, more rest, and more love than before. Anything that could hurt her body may also hurt the baby.



©Bill Dull

A pregnant woman needs to eat well to have the strength to work, fight illness, and stay healthy. Eating well protects the mother's teeth and bones and makes the baby grow strong in her womb. She will be stronger at the time she gives birth and will have less bleeding.

Eating well during pregnancy helps the mother to fight infections and to recover quickly after the baby is born. Good food will also help her to have plenty of milk for breast-feeding.



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What foods are best for pregnant women to eat?

Every country has its main food which people eat a lot of. Here are a few of them:



- Rice
- Potatoes
- Yams
- Pasta (or macaroni)
- Bread
- and Corn

These main foods should **not** be refined or polished because then, much of the goodness is gone.



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For example brown bread is much better than white bread,

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..and brown rice is a lot better than white rice.



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But these kinds of food are not enough for pregnant women. They also need to eat other foods like beans, peas, lentils, nuts and seeds. It is **much better** to eat these foods than to eat meat or fish. But **if** you cannot get them, then you should eat a little meat or fish together with the main foods.



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Eat more fruits and vegetables

Pregnant women need extra vitamins and minerals so they should eat more fresh fruit and vegetables.



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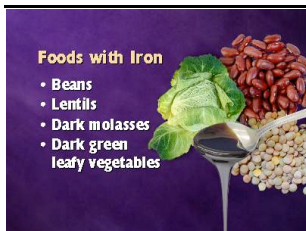
Important Minerals

- Iron
- Calcium
- Iodine

There are **three** important **minerals** pregnant women need every day:



- Iron
- Calcium (and)
- Iodine.



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Foods with Iron

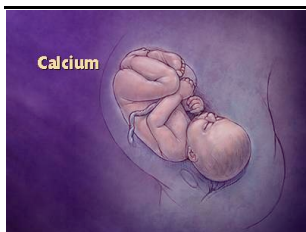
- Beans
- Lentils
- Dark molasses
- Dark green leafy vegetables

Iron is needed for the baby to have healthy blood. Some good foods for iron are: ¹



- Beans,
- Lentils,
- Dark molasses (and)
- Dark green leafy vegetables.

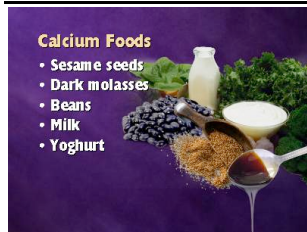
If you cannot get any of these foods, remember that meat, fish, chicken and eggs also contain iron.



©Artville #ANO038

The baby will also need calcium for good bones and teeth, especially in the last half of pregnancy. This calcium is taken from the mother's body to help the baby grow. If the woman does not eat foods with enough calcium, or take calcium tablets, her bones and teeth will become weak.

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Foods that contain good amounts of calcium are sesame seeds, dark molasses, beans, yellow and green leafy vegetables and also milk (or sour milk).



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Iodine is another very important mineral for our health. We don't need a lot of it, but we should always have some in our food. **Salt** is a good source of iodine, if it is iodized. Always try to buy this kind of iodized salt. But remember not to use a lot of salt because it can cause health problems like swelling of your feet and high blood pressure.

Seaweed and sea fish are also good sources of iodine.



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Apart from eating well, there are many other important things we can do.

Keeping clean is very important in staying healthy during pregnancy. Bathe and wash regularly, and brush your teeth every day. Keeping clean will help prevent infections.



©WHO/TDR/Crump #9809516

Be active. In many places, women get all the exercise they need by carrying water, working in the fields, milling grain, and walking up and down hills.



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Women who work sitting or standing in offices, stores, or factories, or who work inside at home, usually need more exercise. If you spend a lot of time sitting down, try to walk some every day.

Being active keeps the body strong and helps pregnant women get ready for the hard work of giving birth. It can also make a woman have more energy and feel happier.

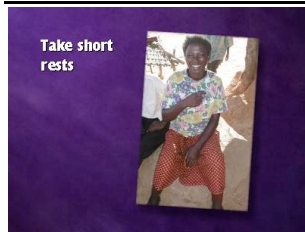


©George Sedupane

Rest is very important too.

Rest helps pregnant women to stay strong and fight against illnesses. It also helps prevent **miscarriages** (when the baby is born too soon and dies), high blood pressure, sick babies, and other problems. Eight hours of good sleep each night is best.

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It is good for a pregnant woman to sit and relax a little every few hours, put her feet up, or even take a short nap. The family needs to know and understand that it is important for her to rest, even during the day.



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Do not drink alcohol, use drugs, smoke, or chew tobacco.

These are all harmful for the pregnant woman **and** her baby.



©Stanford/PNGMP

Alcohol can cause a baby to be deformed, and have a head and brain that is too small. Because of this, the baby might be slow mentally. A woman that drinks alcohol may also not eat as well as she should. This can lead to more health problems for her and her baby.



©Journal of Health and Healing

Drugs like opium, heroin and cocaine, are very dangerous. If a pregnant woman uses them, her baby may be born with defects or even die. And the baby could be addicted to the drug and suffer greatly after birth. A woman who uses drugs also has a greater chance of getting sick with AIDS and then giving it to the baby.



©Loma Linda/Hardinge Series

Smoking is especially harmful to pregnant mothers. It causes her blood vessels to get smaller. As a result, less food and air are carried to the baby in her womb. The baby starves and cannot grow properly. It might even become ill and die in the womb.



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Do not drink caffeine (coffee, tea, cola)

Coffee, tea and cola drinks have caffeine. Pregnant women who drink them are more likely to have their baby die before it is born.

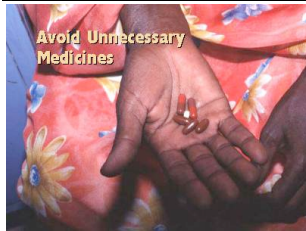


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Caffeine can damage the **nerves** of the baby. As the child grows, it may become too active and not be able to concentrate well. It may have difficulty learning things at school.

It would be best for all women to avoid these harmful things, because most women do not find out that they are pregnant until the second month of pregnancy. By that time, damage may have already been done to their baby.

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Avoid taking unnecessary medicines during pregnancy

When a woman takes medicine, the medicine gets into her blood and then goes into the baby's blood. Medicines that are helpful to grown women can hurt a baby who is still inside the mother.



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These harmful medicines include:

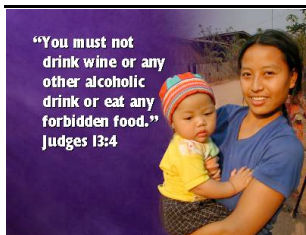
- Cough syrups
- Painkillers,
- home remedies like **strong** plant medicines or **herbs**,
- and modern medicines like **antibiotics**.



©Inter American Development Bank

Get regular check-ups during pregnancy

Village health workers, midwives and doctors all want to help women to have healthy pregnancies. They can check to make sure that you and the baby are fine; and if there are any problems, they can do something right away to help.



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God cares for us and wants us to enjoy health and happiness. A long time ago, God spoke to a pregnant woman saying...



*“You must not drink wine or any other alcoholic drink or eat any forbidden food.”*² (Judges 13:4) God knew that those things were dangerous for the mother and the baby.

By following His counsel, we can have better pregnancies, and healthier, happier families.

1 USDA Nutrient Data Base for Standard Reference, Release 12, 1998. Manufacturer's information.

2 New Living Translation