



# Pregnancy weight gain and healthy eating

**T**HE ideal weight to gain during pregnancy depends on your weight before you conceive. Most pregnant women gain between 10kg and 12.5kg (22lb to 26lb), putting most of the weight after week 20.

Much of the extra weight is due to the growing baby, but your body will also be storing fat, ready to make breast milk after your baby is born. Putting on too much or too little weight can lead to health problems for you or your unborn baby. So keeping an eye on the following weight gain patterns will help you and your baby in the long run:

## Simple rule of thumb

First trimester: 1 pound per month, (about 4lb or 2kg) in the first three months.

Second trimester: 1 pound per week for the next three months, (12 - 14lb or 5-7kg) in total.

Third trimester: around 1 pound per week, (12lb or 5kg) over the last three months.

(But remember, these are average figures for large numbers of women so just because your weight gain pattern is different, it doesn't mean anything is wrong. Focus should not be so much on how much weight you are gaining during pregnancy but how well you are eating during your pregnancy!)

It is recommended that women should aim for a weight gain related to their pre-pregnancy BMI:

If BMI was above 26, you should aim for a weight gain of between 15 and 25lb (7 and 11.5kg).

If BMI was between 20 and 26, you should aim for a weight gain of 25 to 35lb (11.5 to 16kg).

If BMI was less than 20, you should aim for a weight gain of 28 to 40lb (12.5 to 18kg).

Women with a BMI of 30 or more can achieve significant health benefits if they lose between 5-10 percent of their weight. Further weight loss to achieve a BMI within the healthy range of 18.5 and 24.9 is encouraged. You can find a BMI calculator at Maya.com.bd

Remember: You need only 300 more calories compared to your daily requirement.

## Underweight and pregnant

Choose plenty of nutritious foods that contain some healthy fat and adequate calories. Never skip your breakfast. Morning sickness can make it difficult initially but try to eat in the morning - you can start slowly.

Add some peanut butter or a slice of cheese to your morning toast for an extra protein boost. Add a couple of slices of guava, apples, oranges, watermelons and a handful of assorted nuts or seeds to your salads for extra protein and healthy fat.

Eat two or three snacks between meals. Choose foods like yoghurt (for protein and

calcium), dried fruits (for vitamins, minerals, and fibre), or a fruit and yoghurt smoothie (for protein, calcium, vitamins, and minerals). Replace soda with milk (for protein and calcium) or juices that are high in vitamin C or beta carotene, an antioxidant. Grapefruit juice, orange juice and papaya nectar are rich in vitamin C. Carrot juice has lots of beta carotene which is needed for the growth of your baby's organs.

## Overweight plan

Fruits, vegetables and whole grains are high on the list for overweight pregnant women. Eat at least 5 different coloured fruits and vegetables every day. The colours will provide you with the essential nutrients, antioxidants and fibres. Fruits such as wood apple, watermelons, and cantaloupe help with heartburn in pregnancy and are packed with useful vitamins and minerals. If acid reflux is not a problem you can eat grapefruit, guava, thorn apple and starfruit.

Spinach, broccoli, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, carrots beetroots are some greens rich in nutrients. It is suggested you try to eat 3-4 portions of fruits per day and 3-4 portions of veggies. Brown rice and laal ata ruti will provide you with useful energy that are easy to release and the fibre prevents constipation. You should have 6-11 servings of complex carbohydrate every day.

In addition, lean proteins and low-fat dairy products are important sources of both protein and calcium. Baked chicken breast and green beans are healthy choices for overweight pregnant women. Oils and sugars are not completely off the list, but you should limit their quantities.

Learning to measure portion sizes is an important skill for any pregnant woman, especially one who is overweight. A serving of meat should be about the size of a deck of cards, and a serving of bread is a single slice. The serving size of vegetables and dairy is 1 cup, while that of fruit is ½ cup. Women who pay attention to their serving sizes can potentially avoid eating too much, even of a good thing.

Your doctor will also give you advice on weight gain and watching out for what to avoid during pregnancy. Always remember to ask these questions during your regularly checkups.

While it is important to keep a balanced diet and to make sure you are gaining weight steadily during your pregnancy, remember to enjoy this wonderful time as well!

**By Dr Kazi Mashfia Fardeen, Medical specialist, Maya.com.bd**

**If you have any questions on pregnancy diets and eating plans, be sure to ask Maya at www.maya.com.bd**

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