



The Nutrition Times

PREPARED MONTHLY BY LOCAL DIETITIANS FROM
ALBERTA HEALTH SERVICES, NUTRITION SERVICES

Healthy Weight Gain in Pregnancy

Healthy eating and active living can make a positive difference in your and your baby's health. Gaining the right amount of weight during pregnancy is important for both you and your baby.

Why is weight gain important in pregnancy?

Gaining too little:

Women who do not gain enough weight tend to have babies that:

- are born premature
- weigh less than average
- are small at birth

Not gaining enough weight can increase your baby's risk of disease early in life, the chance of mental and physical disabilities, as well as other health problems later in life.

Gaining too much:

Women who gain too much weight tend to have:

- a more difficult delivery
- a baby that is large at birth (more than 9 lbs [4.1kg])
- a difficult time losing weight after pregnancy
- high blood pressure and high blood sugar during pregnancy
- a baby who could have problems with overweight and obesity later in life



How much weight should I gain?

The amount of weight you should gain in pregnancy is based on your Body Mass Index (BMI) before pregnancy. You can determine your BMI by using the formula of $BMI = \text{weight (in kg)} \div \text{height (in m}^2\text{)}$. Look at the table below to find out how much weight is healthy for you to gain.

Weight category	Pre-pregnant BMI	Total weight gain for pregnancy	Weight gain rate in 2 nd and 3 rd trimesters*
Underweight	< 18.5	20-40 lbs (12.5 – 18 kg)	1.0 – 1.3 lbs/week (0.44-0.58 kg/week)
Healthy Weight	18.5 – 24.9	25 – 35 lbs (11.5 – 16 kg)	0.8 – 1.0 lbs/week (0.35 – 0.5 kg/week)
Overweight	25.0 – 29.9	15 – 25 lbs (7 – 11.5 kg)	0.5 – 0.7 lbs/week (0.23 – 0.33 kg/week)
Obese	≥ 30.0	11 – 20 lbs (5 – 9 kg)	0.4 – 0.6 lbs/week (0.17 – 0.27 kg/week)

* calculations assume a 1.1 – 4.4 lb (0.5 – 2.0 kg) weight gain in first trimester

Tips for healthy weight gain:

1. Healthy eating can help you stay on track and gain a healthy amount of weight.

- **Eat breakfast every day.** Eating breakfast gives you energy for the day and can help you get important nutrients.
- **Eat small meals and snacks throughout the day.** Eating every 2 to 4 hours can help you feel good and gives your baby a steady supply of nutrients to help them grow. Including an evening snack may help with morning sickness.
- **Eat “twice as healthy” not “twice as much”.** You only need an extra 350 calories in your 2nd trimester and an extra 450 calories in your 3rd trimester to provide the energy your baby needs to grow. This is equal to an extra 2 to 3 food guide servings per day. A great way to include these extra food guide servings is by having a healthy snack:
 - ¾ cup (175 mL) yogurt, ½ cup (125 mL) berries, ½ cup (125 mL) granola
 - ½ medium banana, 2 Tbsp (30 mL) peanut butter on 1 slice whole grain bread, ½ cup (125 mL) milk
 - 1 small pita with 1.5 oz (50 g) cheese, 1 medium tomato



2. Physical activity can help you feel energized and prevent too much weight gain.

- **Start any time.** Even if you were inactive before pregnancy you can still start. Be sure to mention your goals with your physician before you begin.
- **Continue to stay active during all trimesters.** As long as you are feeling well you can continue activity throughout your entire pregnancy. You may need to change the exercises and/or decrease the intensity or duration if the activity becomes uncomfortable.
- **Choose safe activities.** In the 3rd trimester your centre of gravity changes and you are at a higher risk of losing your balance. To help reduce your risk of falling, choose activities like walking, riding a stationary bike, swimming or pool exercises. Avoid activities that require you to lie on your back after the fourth month of pregnancy.

What can I do if I think I have gained too much or too little?

Don't panic. If you have gained too much weight in pregnancy now is not the time to diet! Discuss weight concerns with your physician and contact your local dietitian.

Living Healthy Program: Weight Management Series call **Medicine Hat** 403-529-8969, **Brooks** 403-793-6659.

Brooks: Infant Feeding Class Jan. 16th 10am -12pm **Free**, **Picky Eating Class** Jan. 29th 6:30pm - 8:30pm **Free**; **Prenatal Nutrition Class** (monthly) Jan. 8th 7pm - 9pm. For all classes register at 403-501-3300.

Medicine Hat: Feeding Tiny Tummies - Picky Eating class Tues, Feb 12th 7-9 pm **Free**, Register at 403-502-8249; **Prenatal Nutrition Class** (monthly) Jan. 7th Register at 403-502-8215.

Lethbridge: Baby Steps Class – Nutrition: Making Baby Food Jan 17th and 22nd Register at 403-388-6668; **Building Healthy Lifestyles Classes:** Fat Facts Jan. 7th 1:30-3:00pm; Picky Eating Jan. 21st 1:30-3:00pm; Fibre & Salt Smarts Jan. 28th 1:30-3:00pm. Register at 403-388-6654.

Sources: Healthy Eating & Active Living for Pregnancy (Alberta Health). Key Actions for Healthy Weight Gain in Pregnancy – Guide for professionals (AHS).



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