

9054 - Pregnancy weight gain: What's healthy?



Like it or not, pregnancy weight gain is inevitable. Your baby's growth and development depend on it. But eating for two isn't a license to eat double your normal amount of food. Use healthy lifestyle habits to control your pregnancy weight gain, support your baby's health and make it easier to shed the extra pounds after delivery.

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to pregnancy weight gain. How much weight you need to gain depends on various factors, including your pre-pregnancy weight and body mass index (BMI). Your health and your baby's health also play a role.

Work with your health care provider to determine what's right for you. Consider these general guidelines for pregnancy weight gain:

Pre-pregnancy weight	Recommended weight gain
Underweight (BMI less than 18.5)	28 to 40 pounds (about 13 to 18 kilograms)
Normal weight (BMI 18.5 to 24.9)	25 to 35 pounds (about 11 to 16 kilograms)
Overweight (BMI 25 to 29.9)	15 to 25 pounds (about 7 to 11 kilograms)
Obese (BMI 30 or greater)	11 to 20 pounds (about 5 to 9 kilograms)

If you're carrying twins or multiples, you'll likely need to gain more weight. Again, work with your health care provider to determine what's right for you.

When you're overweight

Although excess weight carries risks — such as gestational diabetes and high blood pressure — pregnancy isn't the time to lose weight. Even if you're overweight before pregnancy, it's important to gain a healthy amount of weight during pregnancy. Of course, it's important to keep an eye on the scale. If you gain more than the recommended amount during pregnancy and you don't lose the weight after the baby is born, the excess pounds increase your life-long health risks.

When you're underweight

If you're underweight, it's essential to gain a reasonable amount of weight while you're pregnant — especially during the second and third trimesters. Without the extra weight, your baby may be born earlier or smaller than expected.

Where does pregnancy weight gain go?

Let's say your baby weighs in at 7 or 8 pounds (about 3 to 3.6 kilograms). That accounts for some of your pregnancy weight gain. But what about the rest? Here's a sample breakdown:

- Baby: 7 to 8 pounds (about 3 to 3.6 kilograms)
- Larger breasts: 1 to 3 pounds (about .5 to 1.4 kilograms)
- Larger uterus: 2 pounds (about 1 kilogram)
- Placenta: 1 1/2 pounds (about .7 kilogram)
- Amniotic fluid: 2 pounds (about 1 kilogram)
- Increased blood volume: 3 to 4 pounds (about 1.4 to 1.8 kilograms)
- Increased fluid volume: 3 to 4 pounds (about 1.4 to 1.8 kilograms)
- Fat stores: 6 to 8 pounds (about 2.7 to 3.6 kilograms)



Putting on the pounds

In the first trimester, most women don't need to gain much weight — which is good news if you're struggling with morning sickness.

If you start out at a healthy weight, you need to gain only a few pounds (less than 2 kilograms) in the first few months of pregnancy — though due to changes in your body it can feel as if you've gained more. You can do this with an extra 150 to 200 calories a day, about the amount in an 8-ounce low-fat yogurt.

Steady weight gain is more important in the second and third trimesters — especially if you start out at a healthy weight or you're underweight. This often means gaining 3 to 4 pounds (about 1.4 to 1.8 kilograms) a month until delivery. An extra 300 calories a day — half of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich and a glass of skim milk — might be enough to help you meet this goal. If you began your pregnancy underweight, your health care provider may suggest boosting your caloric intake more.

The menu

It would be easy to add calories to your diet with junk food, but this won't give your baby the nutrients he or she needs. It's more important to avoid overeating and make nutrient-rich choices. Consider these suggestions:

- Trade white bread and pasta for the whole-grain variety.
- Choose a salad with low-fat dressing or black beans instead of a burger and fries.
- Eat sliced fruit instead of a cookie.
- Choose juices fortified with calcium and other nutrients.

Working with your health care provider

Your health care provider will keep a close eye on your weight. Do your part by eating healthy foods and keeping your prenatal appointments. To keep your pregnancy weight gain on target, your health care provider may offer suggestions for boosting caloric intake or scaling back as needed.

Source: Mayo Clinic 2009