Nutrition during Pregnancy

Eating right during your pregnancy is one of the best things you can do for yourself and your baby. Pregnant women need to consume about 300 calories more per day than they usually eat. Pregnant women are sometimes worried about gaining too much weight. It is important to remember that pregnancy is a time of growing and change. Pregnancy should not be a time of dieting because adequate nutrition is essential for the baby's growth.

Gaining the right amount of weight is also an important part of a healthy pregnancy. A woman of average weight before pregnancy is expected to gain about 25-35 pounds during her pregnancy. Underweight women often need to gain slightly more. Overweight women often gain very little or sometimes may even lose weight during pregnancy despite their increased caloric intake.

A variety of foods each day will ensure that you are getting the right nutrients. Every diet should include proteins, complex carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, and fats. When you are pregnant you may also need extra nutrients such as iron for anemia, folic acid for prevention of neural tube defects, and calcium for the health of your teeth and bones. Remember to take your daily prenatal vitamin as a supplement to your dietary intake. Most over-the-counter prenatal multivitamins for women contain the recommended amounts of essential nutrients. In some cases your doctor may recommend children's chewable vitamins or a prescription prenatal vitamin. Talk with your provider if you are unsure whether your supplement is the right one for you.

There are some foods that pregnant women should avoid because of the risks caused by certain harmful bacteria. These foods include unpasteurized milk, soft cheeses, raw/unwashed fruits and vegetables, and raw or undercooked meat or poultry. Women should also avoid eating large amounts of fish which may be high in mercury. Fish that should be avoided are shark, swordfish, king mackerel, and tilefish. However, pregnant women can safely eat 12 ounces of other types of cooked fish/shellfish each week.

Water is also a very important part of your diet. We cannot live without it, and during pregnancy it is especially important. Almost ¾ of the body's weight is water. Water helps to build new tissue and aids in digestion. It also allows nutrients and waste products to move within and out of the body. Water also helps to form the amniotic fluid around the baby. Don't wait to drink until you're thirsty. Thirst can actually be a sign of dehydration. Sometimes dehydration can lead to irritability in your uterine muscle and could result in preterm labor. Be sure to always have a bottle of water on hand and drink often throughout the day.

If you have special dietary needs or questions, we have a dietician available to help you with these issues. Eating healthy during your pregnancy is one of the best things you can do for yourself and your baby.