

## Healthy Weight Gain during Pregnancy

It is important to eat well during pregnancy. Keeping track of your weight during pregnancy is also important for your's and your baby's health. Women who do not gain enough weight have a risk of preterm birth. Women who are overweight or gain too much weight during pregnancy have a higher risk of:

- High blood pressure
- Gestational diabetes (diabetes during pregnancy)
- A large baby
- Caesarean sections
- Birth defects
- Difficulty losing weight after your baby is born. This can increase your long term risk of diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.

Check out *the Healthy eating in pregnancy* information booklet for guidelines on how much you should eat during pregnancy.

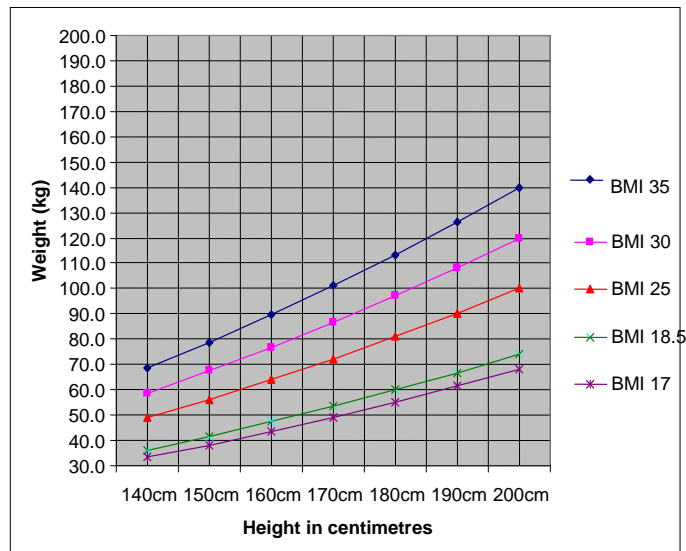
### How much weight should I gain?

The weight you should aim to gain depends on what your weight (and body mass index - BMI) was **before** you became pregnant. BMI is the number used to work out what is the recommended amount for you. If you were given a handheld record from antenatal clinic you may find your BMI in here. If not, you can work it out using the steps below.

1. My pre-pregnancy weight: \_\_\_\_\_ kg      My height: \_\_\_\_\_ m (e.g. 165cm would be 1.65m)

$$\text{BMI} = \text{weight}/(\text{height} \times \text{height}) = \text{_____ kg/m}^2$$

2. Another way to find your BMI is to use the graph below. From your height and weight trace your fingers along the lines until they meet. That is your BMI. Your dietitian or midwife could help if you are unsure of how to do this.



## Weight gain during pregnancy

Use this table as a general guide to what you should gain during pregnancy.

If your <b>pre-pregnancy BMI</b> was..	<b>You should gain...</b>
Less than 18.5 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	12½ to 18kg
<b>18.5 to 24.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>11½ to 16kg</b>
25 to 29.9 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	7 to 11½ kg
Above 30 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	5 to 9kg

### First Trimester:

All women can expect to gain one or two kilograms in the first three months of pregnancy.

### Second and Third Trimesters:

If your <b>pre-pregnancy BMI</b> was..	<b>You should gain...</b>
Less than 18.5 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	½ kg/week
<b>18.5 to 24.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>400g/week</b>
Above 25kg/m <sup>2</sup>	Less than 300g/week

### Are you having twins or triplets?

If you are going to have more than one baby you will need to gain more weight than outlined above.

Use these recommendations instead:

If your <b>pre-pregnancy BMI</b> was..	<b>You should gain...</b>
Less than 18.5 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	Talk with your dietitian or obstetrician
<b>18.5 to 24.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>16 to 24kg</b>
25 to 29.9 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	14 to 23 kg
Above 30 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	11 to 19kg

### What should I do if I am not gaining enough weight?

Sometimes women who have morning sickness early in pregnancy find it difficult to gain enough weight.

Sometimes they even lose a small amount of weight. If this happens to you, you do not need to be concerned as long as you start to gain weight in the second trimester of your pregnancy.

It is important to have three meals a day, and also have between-meal snacks, such as morning tea, afternoon tea and supper. Good snacks include:

- Fruit toast
- Dried fruit, nuts and seeds
- Yoghurt
- Muesli bars
- Cheese & crackers
- Milk Drinks (i.e. milo and milk, milkshakes)

### What should I do if I am gaining weight too quickly?

Gaining too much weight when you are pregnant can increase your blood pressure. To control your weight gain, limit foods that are high in fat and sugar. Make sure you are not 'eating for two'. It is also important to include regular exercise most days.

#### Limit the amount of fat you eat by:

- Limiting biscuits, cakes, chips and crisps
- Reducing the amount of fat in cooking
- Choosing low fat dairy products (e.g. milk, yoghurt)
- Avoiding cream and sour cream
- Trimming fat from meat before cooking
- Using healthy cooking methods like grilling, steaming, baking
- Removing skin from chicken
- Limiting high fat takeaway foods

#### Limit high sugar foods by:

- Drinking water, not soft drink or cordial
- Using "diet" or low joule products
- Limiting fruit juices to **one glass** per day as these are high in sugar (even 100% juice)
- Limiting chocolates, lollies, sweets and desserts

**Listen to you hunger cues** and only have a snack if you are actually hungry

**Watch your serve sizes**, especially of foods like rice, pasta, potato and meat

## Being active during pregnancy

### How much is enough?

To get the most health benefits, a good goal is **at least half an hour of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably, all days**. You do not have to do it all at once. Your exercise can be spread over the day, in ten minute blocks. Try three ten minute walks, or two fifteen-minute periods of activity.

### What DOES moderate-intensity activity MEAN?

*Moderate-intensity* means you are exercising at a comfortable pace. A good guideline is the "talk test" - you should be able to easily hold a conversation without being short of breath.

### What are some activities that I can do?

Many activities are safe during pregnancy including:

- Swimming
- Walking
- Cycling on an exercise bike
- Yoga or Pilates
- Low-impact aerobics, like water aerobics
- Light resistance gym program

Classes that specially cater to pregnant women may be more suited to your needs and body changes during your pregnancy. They can adapt exercises for you, such as having you lie on your side as you exercise rather than on your back, which is not advised throughout your pregnancy.

Remember that incidental activity counts too! This is physical activity that builds up as part of everyday activities. Try to:

- Use the stairs instead of the lift
- Park your car further away from the shops for extra steps
- Get off the train or bus one stop early and walk home
- Be active around the house or garden

Most activities are safe, as long as you:

- take things easy
- stop when you are tired
- drink plenty of water
- wear suitable clothing
- do not become overheated
- stop the activity if you experience any pain that doesn't settle quickly

#### **Avoid:**

- **excessive stretching.** Your ligaments can be softened by the hormonal changes during pregnancy. Be careful with side kicks in aqua-aerobics and swimming breaststroke.
- **high impact activities or contact sports.** These include running, surfing, water skiing, trampolining, gymnastics, netball, touch football or squash.
- **activities that may limit your oxygen supply.** Two examples are scuba diving and mountain climbing.

#### **How can I keep motivated?**

- Plan to do an exercise class each week or to walk with a friend
- Do exercises that you enjoy
- Remind yourself of how good you feel when you do and after you are active.
- Remember the benefits of being active during pregnancy.

Benefits include:

- less lower back pain
- less nausea
- less heartburn
- lower stress levels
- more energy
- better bowel habits
- better sleep
- being more relaxed
- less anxiety
- a lower risk of diabetes and heart disease
- quicker return to normal after child birth

**Returning to your pre-pregnancy weight.**

The greatest amount of weight loss occurs in the first 3 months after birth and then continues at a slow and steady rate until 6 months after birth. Breastfeeding helps you return to your pre-pregnancy weight as some of the weight you gain during pregnancy is used as fuel to make breast milk. Healthy eating and regular physical activity in the postnatal period will also help you to lose the weight gained during pregnancy.

**Future pregnancies**

If you are planning another pregnancy, it is a good idea to return to your pre-pregnancy weight first, or close to this. Starting your pregnancy at a BMI above the healthy weight range puts you and your baby at greater health risks during pregnancy and retaining excess weight over subsequent pregnancies increases your risk of lifestyle diseases. Speak to your Dietitian for more advice.

**Content in this handout was informed by:**

Callaway, L.K., et al., The prevalence and impact of overweight and obesity in an Australian obstetric population. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 2006. 184(2): p. 56-59

Institute of Medicine (2009). Weight gain during pregnancy: Re-examining the guidelines. Accessed on 2 June 2009. [www.iom.edu/CMS/3788/48191/68004.aspx](http://www.iom.edu/CMS/3788/48191/68004.aspx)

Physical Activity - Information provided is consistent with current Active Australia guidelines for physical activity and Sports Medicine Australia –Exercise in Pregnancy