

NGĀ KAI TOTIKA MĀ TE WAHINE HAPŪ

Eating for Healthy Pregnant Women



Eating well and doing moderate exercise during pregnancy is important for you and your baby.

Seek antenatal care as soon as you suspect you are pregnant.

Some pregnant women will have special nutritional needs. Ask your doctor or midwife to arrange for you to see a dietitian.

It is best to seek advice if you:

- are an adolescent (18 years or younger)
- have a medical condition affecting your eating, such as diabetes
- are having more than one baby, eg, twins or triplets
- are a vegetarian or vegan.



Breads and Cereals

- Eat plenty of breads and cereals – including rice, pasta, breakfast cereals and other grain products.
- These provide carbohydrates, fibre and other nutrients.
- Choose wholemeal and wholegrain varieties which provide extra fibre (to help prevent constipation), B vitamins and minerals.

Choose at least six servings of breads and cereals each day, preferably wholegrain.

SERVING SIZE EXAMPLES

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| • 1 roll (50g) | • 1/2 cup cooked cereal (130g) |
| • 1 muffin (80g) | • 1 cup cooked pasta (150g) |
| • 1 medium slice rewena bread | • 1 cup cooked rice (150g) |
| • 1 medium slice of bread (26g) | • 1 cup cassava or tapioca (150g) |
| • 2 cups cornflakes (30g) | • 2 plain sweet biscuits (14g) |
| • 1/2 cup muesli (55g) | |

Milk and Milk Products

Pregnant women need milk and milk products for protein and calcium. You need extra calcium for your baby's growing bones and teeth, as well as your own.

- Choose reduced or low fat milk, yoghurt and cheese.
- If you are drinking soy milk, choose one which is calcium fortified (check the label).
- Other foods such as wholemeal bread, peanuts, broccoli, canned salmon, sardines, spinach, baked beans and tofu contain calcium, but in lower amounts.

Choose at least three servings of milk or milk products, preferably reduced or low fat, each day.

Milk and milk products provide New Zealanders with most of their calcium. If you do not eat these foods or eat very little of them, it is best to see your doctor, or midwife about taking a calcium supplement.

SERVING SIZE EXAMPLES

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| • 1 glass milk (250ml) | • 2 slices cheese (40g) |
| • 1 pottle yoghurt (150g) | • 2 scoops ice cream (140g) |





Lean Meats, Chicken, Seafood, Eggs, Cooked Dried Beans, Peas and Lentils

These give you protein, iron, zinc and other nutrients.

- Your body needs more iron and zinc during pregnancy.
- Care must be taken with these foods. Lean meats, chicken and seafood need to be fresh and well cooked (see Listeria section).
- Choose lean meats, chicken and seafood.

- Iron in lean meats, chicken and seafood is well absorbed. Cooked dried beans, peas and lentils also contain iron but this is not so well used.
- Include foods rich in Vitamin C with your meals to help absorb iron. Fresh vegetables and fruit, especially oranges, kiwifruit, tomatoes and broccoli are rich sources of Vitamin C.

Choose at least two servings from this group each day.

SERVING SIZE EXAMPLES

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 slices cooked meat (approx 100g)• 3/4 cup mince or casserole (195g)• 1 egg (50g)• 1 medium fillet of fish – cooked (100g) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 medium steak (120g)• 3/4 cup dried, cooked beans (135g)• 2 drumsticks or 1 chicken leg (110g) |
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Keep Active and Eat for a Steady Weight Gain

In early pregnancy your energy (kilojoule or calorie) needs increase by a small amount. You can expect to eat more food as the pregnancy progresses but this does not mean you need to “eat for two”. A good indicator of whether you are eating enough is appetite and a steady weight gain, especially after the first three months.

A healthy weight gain during pregnancy is best for you and your baby.

While there is no exact healthy weight gain, thin women may need to gain more weight, overweight women less. Talk to your midwife or doctor if you are concerned about your weight gain.

Dieting during pregnancy is not recommended as it may result in a smaller and unhealthy baby, and it could also affect your health.

Vigorous exercise is also not recommended.

The weight you gain during pregnancy goes to the baby, but also includes:

- the growth of the placenta and the uterus
- fluid around the baby
- breasts getting bigger for breastfeeding
- more blood being made
- fat stores which will be needed as energy for breastfeeding.

- Regular moderate exercise such as walking, swimming and cycling helps strengthen your heart and lungs and gives you extra energy and strength needed for the birth. Choose activities you enjoy which match your level of fitness.
- You may need more rest. Take time out for yourself. Ask your doctor, midwife or a physiotherapist about suitable activities.

Choose and Prepare Foods Low in Fat, Sugar and Salt

The best way to meet your extra needs is to choose foods from the four food groups. These are better sources of fibre, vitamins and minerals. When shopping, read labels and look for foods that are lower in fat, sugar and salt. If using salt, choose iodised salt.

Prepare foods low in fat, sugar and salt by:

- spreading margarine and butter thinly
- choosing lean meats. Trim off the fat, skim fat off stews, remove skin from chicken and eat more grilled, boiled or steamed fish
- when cooking: grill, steam, microwave, boil or bake foods without adding fat, as often as possible
- eating meals without adding extra salt
- choosing foods with no added sugar.

Many fast foods, takeaways and snacks are high in fat, salt and/or sugar, for example, chocolate bars, muesli bars, potato chips, French fries, doughnuts, pies, sweets, fruit leathers, cordials and soft drinks. Save these for treats and eat only occasionally.

Snack Ideas

- Sandwiches – peanut butter, banana, vegemite, cheese, cottage cheese, baked beans or jam.
Spread margarine or butter thinly or only on one side of the bread.

Use bread rolls, rewena bread, crackers, rice cakes, crumpets, pita bread, muffins and baked bread fingers as well as bread.

- Vegetable sticks – keep these in the fridge.
Serve with cottage cheese or peanut butter.
- Fresh fruit – serve whole or cut up with yoghurt.
- Frozen fruit – bananas, oranges, canned unsweetened pineapple or peaches.
- Cereals – choose cereals low in fat and sugar.
- Popcorn – pop using a little oil, margarine or butter or use a microwave. Go easy on salt.
- Yoghurt, cubes of cheese or milk.





Drink Plenty of Fluids Every Day

Use your thirst as a guide. You will need at least 6-8 glasses each day.

Extra fluid may be needed during hot weather, after activity, or if you are vomiting or constipated.

Water, reduced or low fat milk, diluted fruit juice or coconut juice from a fresh coconut are the best choices.

You may need to go to the toilet more often but do not cut down on your fluid intake because of this.

Some women may become swollen and puffy, particularly in the hands and feet. Do not cut down on your fluid intake without consulting your doctor or midwife.

Coffee, tea and cola drinks contain caffeine. Herbal teas may contain caffeine or other substances which cause side effects. Have no more than three cups of any of these drinks each day.

Tea should not be drunk with meals. The tannins in tea mean you will not absorb the iron in the meal as well as you could.

Go easy on soft drinks, cordials and diet drinks as these provide limited nutrients and may be high in sugar.

Alcohol Is Not Recommended

Your baby is sensitive to alcohol. The full effects of alcohol on your baby are unknown.

Alcohol, even in small amounts, will enter the baby's bloodstream, so whatever the mother drinks or eats the baby is having too. It could affect the development of your baby, especially the brain.

Being Smokefree is Recommended

Smoking reduces the oxygen and food supply to the baby and can slow down growth and development.

Avoid smoky environments. "Passive" smoking (inhaling smoke) has the same effect as smoking.

Smoking mothers generally have more premature births and more underweight babies. A small baby does not mean an easier birth.

Eat Well to Cope With Pregnancy Symptoms

Nausea and vomiting are common during early pregnancy and this is often the first sign of being pregnant. This is referred to as “morning sickness” but may occur at any time of the day or night, especially when you are tired or hungry.

Do the best you can. Your extra nutrient needs are small during early pregnancy and this rarely causes any nutritional problems. However, if your vomiting is severe and you are unable to keep any food or fluids down, do seek advice from your doctor or midwife.

- Eat regularly, choosing smaller meals or snacks.
- Have less high fat and spicy foods.
- Try a carbohydrate snack (such as a slice of dry toast, a cracker or fruit) before getting out of bed in the morning.
- Drink small sips of flat lemonade or ginger ale.
- Try ginger, or foods flavoured with ginger.
- Give yourself extra time in the morning. Rushing can make you feel worse.
- Try and rest more.
- If cooking smells make you feel sick, cut down on cooking as much as you can. Have someone else help with cooking.

Indigestion and heartburn are common towards the end of pregnancy.

- Eat regularly, choosing smaller meals or snacks.
- Have less high fat and spicy foods.
- Avoid drinking fluids with meals.
- If a certain food upsets you, leave it for the time being.
- Avoid lying down straight after a meal.
- Going for a walk may help.
- Raise the head of the bed or use extra pillows.
- Check with your doctor or midwife before taking antacids.

Cravings and Aversions

Most women experience strong likes and dislikes (cravings and aversions) for certain foods at some time during pregnancy. Providing you eat a variety of foods from the four food groups every day, cravings and aversions are unlikely to affect your pregnancy.

If you are experiencing problems with cravings, having other eating problems or are not able to eat a variety of foods, ask your doctor or midwife to arrange for you to see a dietitian.

Constipation

Constipation can occur because of hormonal changes causing your gut muscles to relax, together with the pressure from the growing baby.

- Choose wholemeal and wholegrain breads and cereals, and vegetables and fruit, for example, bran muffins, kiwifruit, figs, corn and peas.
- Drink plenty of fluid every day.
- Go for a daily walk or exercise in some other way.

Folic Acid

- Folic acid is a vitamin and is needed for the formation of blood cells and new tissue. During early pregnancy your need for folic acid is higher.
- Choose foods fortified with folic acid or naturally high in folic acid:
 - well washed, fresh, raw or lightly cooked vegetables
 - well washed raw fruit
 - bread and cereals, especially wholegrain
 - cooked dried beans and peas
 - yeast extracts
 - freshly cooked liver and kidney, no more than one serving a week.
- Lack of folic acid has been linked with birth defects such as spina bifida.
- The risk of having a child with these birth defects is very low. The risk can be reduced by taking a folic acid supplement (0.8mg) daily for four weeks before you might become pregnant through to 12 weeks after actually becoming pregnant. This supplement is available from pharmacies.

Supplements

Using vitamin and mineral supplements will not give you extra energy. By choosing a variety of foods from the four food groups, supplements will not be necessary.

If you are taking any vitamin, mineral or herbal supplements, always let your doctor or midwife know. It is best to only take supplements when recommended by your doctor, midwife or a dietitian. Make sure they know you are pregnant.

Listeria

Listeria is a common bacteria which can cause food-related illness. In pregnant women this illness can cause miscarriage and stillbirth.

All foods should be safely handled, stored and protected from cross contamination.

You can reduce the risk by:

- keeping cooked foods and ready to eat foods separate from raw and unprocessed foods, so there is no cross contamination
- eating freshly cooked food as soon as possible after cooking
- using cooked or prepared food, that has been stored in the fridge, within two days
- re-heating cooked food thoroughly so that it is "piping hot", ie, above 70°C. Take special care to heat thoroughly when using microwave ovens.
- washing raw fruit and vegetables thoroughly
- washing your hands and utensils and chopping boards before using for a different food – avoid cross contamination.

Do not eat any of the following foods:

- smoked fish, pre-cooked fish and uncooked fish or seafood products that are chilled or frozen (unless reheated thoroughly and eaten hot)
- paté
- cold pre-cooked chicken
- ham and other chilled pre-cooked meat products
- stored salads and coleslaws
- raw (unpasteurised) milk
- surface-ripened soft cheese (eg. brie, camembert).

For More Information

You and your infant are entitled to receive free Well Child care in accordance with the *Well Child Tamariki Ora National Programme*. This includes advice and support with your own and your infant's nutrition requirements. This programme is delivered from conception to 2–6 weeks after the birth of your infant by your Lead Maternity Carer (an obstetrician, midwife or general practitioner). From 2–6 weeks onwards your Well Child provider (Plunket, public health service, Māori or Pacific provider) will provide this care.

Talk to your Lead Maternity Carer or Well Child provider about other information you want to know.

Other organisations for information

- Healthline and Well Child advice 0800 611 116
- Lactation consultant (IBCLC)
- La Leche League for breastfeeding support and information
- NZ Multiple Birth Association, PO Box 1258, Wellington
- Parents' Centre

For website information

- Ministry of Health www.moh.govt.nz
- Health education resources www.healthed.govt.nz

