

Eating for Two

By Mary Germanotta Duquette

mary@maryduquette.com

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Congratulations – you’re going to have a baby! It’s a happy, crazy time of preparation, reflection, and general surges of joy and anxiety - all at the same time. You wonder how it will be once this new little life comes into your own. You worry about being a good parent - about caring for someone who will be completely dependent upon you.

One good way to ensure that you take care of your baby *right now* is a good diet. And

when you’re pregnant, your diet must include some very specific nutrients. And, no, the nutrients don’t include ice cream and pickles.

First of all, consult your doctor to make sure you don’t have any pressing issues that need your attention regarding your nutritional intake. If all is well, then you can proceed with the regular diet a pregnant woman typically needs.

Secondly, take inventory of your diet before you were pregnant. Make sure that you add - or subtract - what you need as a mother-to-be. For example, you might want to give up that extra cup of coffee, that soda, or those candy-bars. Think about relinquishing the empty calories and replacing them with calories that both your body and your baby can use, in order to maintain good health. Remember that pregnant women really only need an additional 300 calories per day. That’s not a lot. (So much for that extra dessert you thought you could get away with)!



After you’ve weeded out all the empty calories, which will do nothing for your growing baby, you can go shopping and pick up some:

- **Green, leafy vegetables.** These are loaded with vitamins and iron, which helps prevent low birth weight, anemia, and premature delivery.
- **Fish.** Try and get a lot of your fat intake from fish, which is high in

Omega 3. Some studies show that Omega 3 can help brain development in babies – as well as being just generally darned good for you.

- **Various proteins.** Stock your kitchen with nuts, rice and beans, meats, and peanut butter. Proteins are essential for the growth of your baby.
- **Carbohydrates.** In this case, Atkins was wrong. Make sure you get your carbs in. They are important for your energy, and your baby's pre-natal development. Feast on potatoes, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, and couscous. Have a carbohydrate fiesta.
- **Fresh fruit.** Fruit is so much better for you than cookies, cake, or ice cream - although it's okay to indulge in these every once in awhile, in moderation.

Changing your diet is important for you and your baby - but so is exercise. Try to fit low-impact exercise into your daily routine. **Walking** is a great way to get your heart-rate going, and also wards off depression and anxiety. Try a **pre-natal yoga** class for optimum stretching, as you ready your body for delivery. A pre-natal yoga class might also put you in touch with other soon-to-be Moms, and may help you discover a whole support system – which is particularly helpful if you're a first-time mother.

Enjoy this journey into motherhood. It's a wonderful, special time, in which you can relax and reflect on your life, and how it will change – and, mostly for the better! Be good to yourself, get plenty of rest, and treat yourself like the lovely person you are - your baby will thank you for it.



More tips and tricks:

- **Become a label-reader.** As much as possible, try to eat only whole foods. Read labels. If you don't recognize something on the label, don't eat it – just to be on the safe side.
- **Folic Acid.** Being pregnant means you need 600 micrograms of folic acid per day. As well as taking a supplement, preferably recommended by your doctor, you can also make sure you get a full dose by eating foods high in folic acid, such as cereals, breads, spinach, lentils, and orange juice.
- **Would you feed it to your baby?** Before you let any scrap of food pass into your open mouth, try to think about what you would want your baby to eat; then adjust accordingly. If you are about to eat something that you wouldn't think of feeding your baby, maybe it's better just to leave it alone. You'll have plenty of time to

indulge afterwards.

Sources:

- *Essential Nutrients and Vitamins for Pregnancy*
<http://www.americanpregnancy.org>

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