WOMEN OF SIZE AND PREGNANCY

Women want to be healthy, especially when they are pregnant. A pregnant woman’s health has an effect on her baby. It can be a special challenge when a woman starts her pregnancy carrying a lot more weight than she knows is healthy.

How Much Weight is Too Much?

Healthy weight has a wide range and depends on how active you are and your overall body frame. But there is a point at which weight begins to have a serious impact on health. Body mass index (BMI) is a way of checking if your weight is healthy for how tall you are. You can find your BMI by using the chart on the reverse side of this sheet. A BMI of more than 30 increases your risk of serious health problems, such as diabetes. A BMI of 40 or more is very hard for anyone to live with. It can be even more difficult if you become pregnant when carrying that much weight.

I Know it is Hard for Me to Carry This Weight, But Are There Risks for My Baby?

Yes. If you start a pregnancy carrying a lot of extra weight, there is extra risk that you will develop diabetes and blood pressure problems. Diabetes may make your baby grow larger, which makes it more difficult to have a normal birth. It may also make it more likely that your child will develop diabetes later in life. High blood pressure during pregnancy can increase the risk that your baby will be born too early.

I Know I’m Already Carrying A Lot of Extra Weight. Don’t I Have to Gain More Weight for Pregnancy?

No. If you have a BMI of more than 40, you can go through your entire pregnancy and gain very little, if any, weight. If your BMI is less than 40 but more than 30, try to gain no more than 15 pounds. New studies have shown that women with a BMI above 30 are healthier and have healthier babies if they limit their weight gain during pregnancy. Limiting weight gain during pregnancy is not easy. It will take a lot of attention on your part. It also helps to have a good coach—or other health care provider.

I Have Never Exercised Much. Is it Safe to Start Now?

Not only is it safe, it is also very good for you. You probably walk a bit every day already. That’s exercise! It is perfectly safe for you to walk 30 to 60 minutes every day. Wear comfortable shoes and clothes. Open your front door and walk away from your house for 15 minutes as fast as you can. If you can sing while you walk, you are not walking fast enough.

Eating Healthy in Pregnancy

You can be very healthy throughout your pregnancy without eating any extra food. The most important thing is that the food you eat is healthy and that your diet meets all of your nutrition needs.

Some Tips for Making This Work:

- Ask your health care provider if you can be seen more frequently during your pregnancy. At each visit, you will be weighed and will be able to talk with your provider about diet, exercise, and any other challenges you are facing. It is also good to get a pat on the back for all the work you are doing!
- Keep a daily log of all the food you eat and the exercise you have done. It is a great way to make sure you are getting the nutrition you need.
- Ask a friend to walk or exercise with you.
- Every day, take a few minutes and focus on your baby. You are growing a healthy baby. You can do this!
Every Day, Make Sure That You Eat:

- Six servings of whole grain foods like bread or pasta. By reading the label you will know that you are really getting “whole” grain and not just brown-colored bread or pasta (1 slice of bread or half a cup of cooked pasta is a serving).

- Three servings of fruit. Fresh, raw fruit is best (1 small apple or half a cup of chopped or cooked fruit is a serving).

- Five or more servings of vegetables. Fresh, raw vegetables are best (1 medium-sized carrot or half a cup of chopped or cooked vegetables is a serving). Avoid butter, margarine, and fatty salad dressing. If you would like a topping on your vegetables, use nonfat salad dressing or nonfat yogurt.

- Three servings of protein- or iron-rich foods, like lean meat, fish, eggs, or nuts (a piece of meat or fish the size of a pack of cards is a serving).

- One serving of vitamin C–rich food each day—like oranges, grapefruit, strawberries, sweet peppers, mustard greens, or tomatoes (1 small orange is a serving).

- Three servings of calcium-rich food—like nonfat milk, nonfat yogurt, or mustard greens or chard (1 cup of milk or yogurt is a serving).

- Six to 8 large glasses of water. If you do not like the taste of water, add a squirt of lemon juice or a splash of your favorite fruit juice to the glass of water. You do not need to drink anything other than water or nonfat milk when you are pregnant.