

Women of Size and Pregnancy



How much weight is too much for my body?

Healthy weight is different for each person and depends on how active you are and your overall body frame. 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 next page. A BMI of more than 30 increases your risk of serious health problems, such as diabetes and heart disease.

Are there risks for my baby if my weight is high?

A woman whose weight is higher than a weight that is healthy may have more complications during pregnancy and birth. If you start a pregnancy with a BMI higher than 30, you are more likely to get diabetes or high blood pressure during pregnancy. Diabetes may make your baby grow larger, which can make it more difficult to have a vaginal birth. Having diabetes during pregnancy 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. Women who have a high BMI are also more likely to have a longer labor and need a cesarean birth.

How much weight should I gain during my pregnancy?

The healthiest weight gain for you during pregnancy depends on your BMI before getting pregnant. If you have a BMI of 25 or more before you become pregnant, it is healthiest if you gain less weight during pregnancy. If you have a BMI of 25 to 29.9 before you become pregnant, 15 to 25 pounds is a healthy weight gain during pregnancy. If you have a BMI of 30 or more before you become pregnant, 11 to 20 pounds is a healthy weight gain during pregnancy.

I have never exercised much. Is it safe to start now?

Exercise is safe during pregnancy and may help prevent gaining too much weight. Start by finding ways to become more active during the day: take the stairs, walk to work, walk during your breaks, or stretch your muscles for 5 to 10 minutes before bedtime. Build up to include more activity. Walking can be great exercise. If you walk, you should walk fast and try to sweat. Swinging your arms or walking up and down hills will help with this. Your goal should be 30 to 60 minutes of exercise most days of the week.

What are some things I can do to have a healthy weight gain during pregnancy?

You do not have to eat a lot more food when you are pregnant. It is most important to eat healthy foods and be sure that your diet meets all of your nutrition needs. Other things you can do to have a healthy weight gain are:

- 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!
- Eat small meals 5 or 6 times each day rather than larger meals less often. This will help you feel better and make sure your baby has a steady supply of food.
- Keep a daily log of all the food you eat and the exercise you have done.
- Ask a friend to walk or exercise with you.

What should I eat each day?

- 6 servings of whole-grain foods like whole-grain bread or pasta, brown rice, or cereal like Total, shredded wheat, or oatmeal. Read the label to be sure you are getting whole grain and not just brown-colored bread or pasta. A slice of bread, half a cup of cooked pasta or rice, or 1 cup of ready-to-eat cereal is a serving.
- 2 servings of fruit. Fresh, raw fruit is best. A small apple or half a cup of chopped or cooked fruit is a serving.



- 3 or more servings of vegetables. Fresh, raw vegetables are best. A medium-sized carrot or half a cup of chopped or cooked vegetables is a serving. Use olive oil or canola oil to lightly cook vegetables or put on top as dressing. Do not put butter, margarine, or fatty salad dressing on your vegetables.
- Make one of your fruit or vegetable servings a vitamin C-rich food like oranges, grapefruit, strawberries, sweet peppers, mustard greens, or tomatoes.
- 3 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. Eat fatty fish 2 to 3 times a week.
- 3 servings of calcium-rich food like low-fat milk, yogurt, cheese, mustard greens, or chard. A cup (8 oz) of milk or yogurt or a matchbox size of cheese is a serving.
- 6 to 8 large glasses of water. If you do not like the taste of water, add lemon juice or a small amount 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.

Body Mass Index Table																																																
	Normal					Overweight					Obese					Extreme Obesity																																
BMI	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49																	
Height (inches)	Body Weight (pounds)																																															
58	91	96	100	105	110	115	119	124	129	134	138	143	148	153	158	162	167	172	177	181	186	191	196	201	205	210	215	220	224	229	234																	
59	94	99	104	109	114	119	124	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	173	178	183	188	193	198	203	208	212	217	222	227	232	237	242																	
60	97	102	107	112	118	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	174	179	184	189	194	199	204	209	215	220	225	230	235	240	245	250																	
61	100	106	111	116	122	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	164	169	174	180	185	190	195	201	206	211	217	222	227	232	238	243	248	254	259																	
62	104	109	115	120	126	131	136	142	147	153	158	164	169	175	180	186	191	196	202	207	213	218	224	229	235	240	246	251	256	262	267																	
63	107	113	118	124	130	135	141	146	152	158	163	169	175	180	186	191	197	203	208	214	220	225	231	237	242	248	254	259	265	270	278																	
64	110	116	122	128	134	140	145	151	157	163	169	174	180	186	192	197	204	209	215	221	227	232	238	244	250	256	262	267	273	279	285																	
65	114	120	126	132	138	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	186	192	198	204	210	216	222	228	234	240	246	252	258	264	270	276	282	288	294																	
66	118	124	130	136	142	148	155	161	167	173	179	186	192	198	204	210	216	223	229	235	241	247	253	260	266	272	278	284	291	297	303																	
67	121	127	134	140	146	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	198	204	211	217	223	230	236	242	249	255	261	268	274	280	287	293	299	306	312																	
68	125	131	138	144	151	158	164	171	177	184	190	197	203	210	216	223	230	236	243	249	256	262	269	276	282	289	295	302	308	315	322																	
69	128	135	142	149	155	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	209	216	223	230	236	243	250	257	263	270	277	284	291	297	304	311	318	324	331																	
70	132	139	146	153	160	167	174	181	188	195	202	209	216	222	229	236	243	250	257	264	271	278	285	292	299	306	313	320	327	334	341																	

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

For More Information

Choose My Plate: Moms and Moms-to-be

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/moms-pregnancy-breastfeeding>

March of Dimes: Being Overweight During Pregnancy

<https://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/being-overweight-during-pregnancy.aspx>

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 6.2

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