

# Weight gain in pregnancy

The Royal Women's Hospital Fact Sheet / [www.thewomens.org.au](http://www.thewomens.org.au)



the women's  
the royal women's hospital  
victoria australia

## **No matter what your body shape or size, pregnancy can challenge the way you feel about yourself and consequently your perceptions about how you look.**

In a world where “celebrity pregnancies” focus on the importance of “looking good” during pregnancy and immediately afterwards, it is hard to maintain a realistic perspective. But every woman is different, our body shapes are very different and pregnancy affects us in different ways. The most commonsense approach is to stay healthy; fill up on healthy foods, don't deny yourself occasional treats, exercise within your own limits and celebrate your body's ability to produce life.

### **Remember eating well and exercising will also help you to feel good about yourself!**

Weight gain during pregnancy varies from woman to woman. The average weight gain is between 11.5 and 16 kilos. The usual pattern of weight gain is 1 to 2 kilos during the first three months, followed by 0.4 kilos per week or 1 to 2 kilos per month during the final six months. However, not everyone follows this pattern. For example, if you are underweight at the start of the pregnancy you can afford to put on more than the average amount, or if you are overweight at the start of your pregnancy your weight gain may need to be less than average.

### **Important things to keep in mind**

- Do not try to lose weight as inadequate food intake may deprive the baby of nutrients needed for growth.
- On the other hand, gaining excess weight during pregnancy can lead to problems such as high blood pressure or high blood sugar in the mother.
- If you have any concerns about your weight please ask to see a dietitian.

## **If you are concerned about your weight gain**

It is very important for you health and your baby's health that you take a commonsense approach. Pregnancy is not a time for strict “dieting” – or allowing yourself to be hungry.

If you or your dietitian or health professional believe that you are gaining too much weight there are ways that you can reduce your fat intake without depriving yourself of food.

For example you can:

- reduce the amount of fatty foods in your diet
- reduce the amount of sugary foods that you eat
- introduce some moderate exercise or slightly increase the amount of exercise you do now. (You may need to get some further advice from a physiotherapist.)

## **Further suggestions**

### **Ways to reduce fat**

- Grilling, steaming, baking or casseroles are low fat ways of cooking lean meat, fish or chicken.
- Use oil, butter and margarine sparingly.
- Foods that have a high fat content include pastries, battered or crumbed foods, chips, crisps, greasy takeaways and rich desserts.
- Choose low fat dairy products such as low fat milk, low fat yoghurt and reduced fat cheese.

### **Ways to reduce sugar**

Sugar contains no vitamins or minerals so decreasing your intake of sugar will decrease your kilojoule intake without reducing the nutrient value of your diet. Foods high in sugar are soft drinks, cordials, sweet caked and biscuits, chocolates and lollies.

Small amounts of sugar in food and drink however are not considered a problem.



### **Exercise**

Regular exercise is important as long as there are no problems with your pregnancy. Activities such as walking, swimming and cycling will maintain your fitness and vitality and make your pregnancy more enjoyable.

### **Still not sure?**

Your body image can seriously affect the way you think about your body. You may be uncertain about whether you are gaining too much weight or indeed, not enough. You may also wonder about appropriate exercise given your current level of fitness. Every woman is different and you may require an individual assessment of your weight and your fitness requirements.

If you are a patient at the Women's you can ask to be put in contact with our dietitians or our physiotherapists. Most maternity hospitals offer these services.

### **Other places to get support**

#### **If not dieting website**

A good source of positive messages about eating and body image.

Web: [www.ifnotdieting.com.au](http://www.ifnotdieting.com.au)

#### **Queen Victoria Women's Centre – InfoHub**

This website has a dedicated section on Positive Body Image with lots of good information and links to resources.

Web: [www.qwvc.org.au/info-hub.html](http://www.qwvc.org.au/info-hub.html)