

Chapter 1

Eating Right for You and Your Baby

In This Chapter

- ▶ Recognizing the roles good nutrition and steady weight gain play in a healthy pregnancy
 - ▶ Dealing with unpleasant pregnancy side effects by eating right
 - ▶ Understanding why eating small, frequent meals is important
 - ▶ Making the right food decisions throughout your pregnancy
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The role nutrition plays in your baby's development is critical. In fact, some researchers suggest that the nutrients a developing fetus receives in the womb (and that a newborn receives in the first few weeks of life) are more critical than the nutrients received at any other time in life. That may seem quite shocking, but more and more evidence is connecting a woman's nutritional status during pregnancy to the health of her child, not just at birth but throughout his or her life.

This chapter provides you with an overview of pregnancy nutrition. Prepare to discover the basics of what to eat and how to eat it over the course of the next nine months. (As an added bonus, reading this chapter arms you with fact-based answers for when your mother-in-law or that perfect stranger asks you whether eating XYZ food is safe.)

Delving into Pregnancy Nutrition

Eating the right foods while you're pregnant may not be as difficult as you think. Depending on what you ate before you started trying to get pregnant or before you got that positive pregnancy test, you may not need to make many changes after all. If you already gravitate toward fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, and lowfat dairy, the pregnancy diet will be really easy for you to follow. If, on the other hand, you survive on donuts, chips, and fast food, you may need to dig a bit deeper into changing those habits for the sake of your unborn child.

Start eating right before you get pregnant

Eating right is important even when you're still trying to get pregnant. As I explain in Chapter 2, certain nutrients (such as folate) are essential for the development of critical organs within your baby before you realize you're pregnant. So even before you get a positive pregnancy test, focus on filling your body with nutrient-rich foods that will help you stock up your nutritional status so you can start your pregnancy on the right foot.

Tip: All women of childbearing age are encouraged to take a multivitamin that contains folic acid because of the important role folic acid plays in the early development of the neural tube that connects the brain and spinal cord. Switch to a prenatal vitamin when you start trying to get pregnant and keep taking it throughout your pregnancy.



Finding the right balance of calories is one of the many things that women wonder about when they get pregnant. You often hear people say, “Oh, you’re pregnant. So now you can eat for two!” But that’s not really the case. Just think about it for a minute. You’re growing a little baby, not a full-sized adult. Yes, you do typically need to take in extra calories starting in your second trimester, but you certainly don’t need to start eating double. Turn to Chapter 3 to find out exactly how many more calories you need.

The following sections give you a general idea of which foods you should steer clear of throughout your pregnancy and how you should aim to put on those pregnancy pounds.

Knowing which foods to avoid



Before you got pregnant, you may have thought that all you needed to stay away from during your pregnancy was alcohol and possibly caffeine. I’m afraid the list of taboo foods is quite a bit longer than that and includes the following:

- ✓ **Raw and undercooked beef, chicken, fish, and pork:** A meat thermometer can tell you for sure whether a particular meat has reached a safe temperature. (I provide a list of the minimum safe temperatures in Chapter 10.) If you don’t own a meat thermometer, I strongly suggest picking one up. It’ll be your new best friend in the kitchen.

When most people think of sushi, they think of raw fish. As a sushi fan, I was heartbroken by the thought of not having it while I was pregnant, but in reality you can have sushi — as long as it’s not the raw tuna or salmon kind. Imitation crab (used in the California roll), real crab, shrimp, and eel are all cooked, so you can enjoy any of those in your sushi.

- ✓ **Runny eggs:** Eggs need to be cooked all the way through, whether they're in the skillet, a sauce, or a casserole. Cook (or order your eggs in a restaurant) scrambled well or over hard. If the white or yolk is still runny, send it back to the skillet to be cooked until firm. Egg casseroles should be cooked until they reach 160 degrees. Avoid sauces that contain raw eggs, such as hollandaise and béarnaise. And don't forget about raw cookie dough — no licking the spoon if there are raw eggs in the dough!
- ✓ **Unpasteurized milk and cheeses:** Avoid milk or cheese that claims to be *raw* or that doesn't say *pasteurized* on the label. You're free to eat any cheese (including soft cheeses) as long as it has been made with pasteurized milk.

For the full scoop on which foods to avoid completely and which to be cautious of during pregnancy, see Chapter 4.

Gaining your baby weight slowly and steadily

Putting on those pregnancy pounds gradually as your baby puts on weight is really the best approach to weight gain during pregnancy. The pounds you gain will distribute themselves in various tissues of your body, including fat and fluid, as well as your developing baby. (**Remember:** Gaining some fat deposits when you're pregnant is normal and actually necessary!)

Try not to step on the scale every day during your pregnancy. Because of the variation in weight due to fluid balance, you may find that you gain 3 pounds in one day and then lose 1 pound the next day. As long as the overall trend is that you're gaining weight (slowly and steadily, of course) and your doctor determines that your baby is also growing and gaining weight, don't stress out about the exact number on the scale.



To prevent excess weight gain and to keep your heart, lungs, and muscles strong, exercise throughout your pregnancy. In particular, aim for a mix of aerobic exercise, strength training, and yoga (see Chapter 5 for details).

Overcoming Pregnancy's Not-So-Fun Side Effects with Simple Food Tricks

As you may already know, pregnancy brings with it a variety of unpleasant side effects, like constipation, gas, hemorrhoids, heartburn, fatigue, and, of course, that first trimester nausea that can be unbearable. If this is the first

time you're hearing about these side effects, I'm sorry that I'm the one breaking the news to you! But you need to be prepared because you may soon find yourself throwing up, farting, or just feeling really tired all because of that little bundle of joy growing in your belly.

The good news is that not all of these side effects happen to every woman. In fact, you may experience none of them! Additionally, they all have nutritional solutions that can make them tolerable. For example, if nausea is ruling your world, the key is to not let your stomach get too empty. I know this is the last thing you want to hear because you don't feel like eating, but even munching on dry cereal or crackers gives your stomach acid something else to focus on besides making you feel sick.



The caveat regarding food-related tricks for overcoming pregnancy's not-so-pleasant side effects is that there's lots of advice out there. Don't try to follow every tip you hear. Instead, focus on the tip that helps you manage the problem you're experiencing at the time. For instance, eating before bed is a good way to combat nausea in the first trimester, but this routine can be a problem in the second trimester if you start experiencing heartburn. In that case, stop eating a little before bedtime.

Want more tips and tricks for your pregnancy side effect arsenal? Head to Chapter 6.

Discovering How to Eat

People tend to focus most of their nutrition attention on what to eat or what not to eat. Not nearly enough attention goes toward *how* to eat. I'm a believer in eating small quantities frequently throughout the day all the time, but this eating strategy becomes especially important as your belly grows.

In the first trimester, the end goal of eating small amounts frequently is to prevent nausea by having a little bit of food in your stomach at all times (that way, your stomach doesn't have to go into acid overload). As your baby bump grows and you progress into your second and third trimesters, you'll find that your body literally has less room for your stomach! As a result, the baby may press on your stomach and the area where your esophagus meets your stomach, causing heartburn. If you have small amounts of food in your stomach, you're less likely to experience this reflux.



The key to eating small amounts frequently is to enjoy a mix of smaller meals and regular snacks throughout the day. Now before you start envisioning bags of chips and pints of ice cream in your snacking future, remember that the majority of your snacks need to contain the nutrients you and your little one need. Otherwise, you're just eating empty calories. I provide a list of tasty nutritious snacks, as well as advice on how many snacks you may need throughout the day and how big they should be, in Chapter 7.

Another trick for keeping your eating in check is to avoid overindulging in cravings. You'll no doubt hear other women talk about cravings they had in pregnancy, and maybe you've already been experiencing them yourself. I like to blame everything in pregnancy on hormones, but cravings are truly a case of hormones gone wild! Sometimes those hormones cause food aversions (I actually didn't want chocolate during my first trimester with both kids!), and sometimes those hormones make it impossible to imagine living through another moment without one particular food. Don't worry; I show you how to get through this crazy part of pregnancy in Chapter 7.

Making Healthy Choices

If only deciding what to eat every day during pregnancy were simple. First, you have to think about what you *want* to eat; then you have to consider what you *should* eat. Finally, you have to narrow down your choices to what's *available* to eat. To make the decision even harder, these three things are often on completely opposite ends of the healthy-tasty spectrum.

You can make the best decisions for you and your growing belly by arming yourself with some basic information before you head to your favorite restaurant, visit your local grocery store, or prepare your daily meals.

Picking the nutritious options at restaurants and grocery stores

If you're dining out, those wonderful adjectives like *smothered* and *golden* can really take you into a place of love at first description. You may even be getting hungry right now! Making the healthy choice at a restaurant isn't easy, and eating the right portion is even more challenging.

Even though you're entitled to consume more calories during most of your pregnancy, you'd likely wind up consuming far more than your daily recommended amount if you finished off all the huge dinner portions so common in restaurants today. Fortunately, you can combat these oversized portions by asking for half of your meal to go before you even get it or by splitting a dish with a friend or partner. For additional pointers on dining out the healthy way while pregnant, flip to Chapter 8.

Grocery shopping may be last on the totem pole of things that excite you. But it's one of those chores that you have to do — if you want to eat from something other than a take-out box, that is. Pregnancy brings with it many decisions that you have to make at the supermarket, like whether to buy organically grown produce or the conventionally grown kind, which fish to choose, and whether to buy foods containing artificial sweeteners (and if so, which

sweeteners you're comfortable consuming). Fortunately, one way to avoid getting hung up in the decision-making process at the store — and avoid impulse purchases — is by preparing a grocery list ahead of time. See Chapter 9 for a pregnancy-friendly grocery list that you can modify based on your preferences.

Preparing good-for-you-both meals

Your kitchen can be a haven away from the uncertainty of how something was cooked (or who touched it) at a restaurant — not to mention you have more control over the ingredients when you prepare a meal yourself. As I explain in Chapter 10, all you have to do to make your kitchen a safe and healthy place for you to cook and eat during your pregnancy is check the refrigerator, freezer, and pantry for expired items and practice some basic food safety steps, such as:

- ✓ Always wash your hands before you start preparing food.
- ✓ Prepare vegetables away from raw meats.
- ✓ Cook (or reheat) food to the proper temperature.
- ✓ Store food promptly in the fridge or freezer.

Of course, a well-stocked and safe kitchen does you little good if you're not whipping up some tasty meals. For me, half the battle when eating right is simply knowing what to cook for myself and my family. To help you avoid that problem, I've filled Part III of this book with 100 recipes designed to nourish your belly with foods that taste yummy and contain the essential nutrients you and your developing baby need. Whether you're looking for breakfast, snack, salad, main dish, side dish, or dessert options, you'll find a delicious mix of traditional and more adventurous recipes.



To make eating right during pregnancy a little easier (and less stressful), plan out your meals ahead of time. I show you how in Chapter 11.



As you cook, particularly as you get further along in your pregnancy, take frequent breaks. Sit down in a chair or stool and give your feet a rest for a few minutes if you notice you've been standing for a while.

Sticking to Good Nutrition When Faced with Unique Circumstances

Every woman brings with her a unique set of genetics and lifestyle habits that guides how her pregnancy will progress. My hope is that you don't have any complications or unusual circumstances, but I want to prepare you just in case.

Various nutrition-related medical complications may creep up on you. For example, if you find out you have gestational diabetes, your best bet is to seek out the counsel of a registered dietitian to guide you in exactly how many and what kind of carbohydrates to eat. If you're faced with preeclampsia or high blood pressure, you'll have to watch your sodium intake very carefully. If you develop anemia, you'll need to focus on getting plenty of iron-rich foods and making sure your body absorbs as much of it as possible. (For additional guidance on maintaining proper nutrition in the face of pregnancy complications, head to Chapter 18.)



If you're allergic to milk or wheat and worried about whether your allergy is causing you to miss out on important nutrients, never fear. Just make the simple food substitutions I recommend in Chapter 19 to ensure you're eating a diet that's filled with all the nutrients you and your baby need. **Note:** Allergies can run in the family, so Chapter 19 also includes tips on when to introduce highly allergenic foods during your pregnancy and while you're nursing.

Thinking Ahead to Life Post-Delivery

Right now you're probably smiling as you imagine holding your precious baby in your arms for the first time. I encourage those thoughts wholeheartedly, but don't forget to also think about how your life is going to change after your little one arrives.

For one thing, your body is going to need to recover, and it's going to need your help to do so. Also, eventually you'll need to think about shedding any lingering pregnancy pounds so that your body is in good shape — particularly if you want to have more kids. The following sections clue you in to the basics of post-delivery nutrition and the tricks to getting your pre-pregnancy body back.

Figuring out your body's post-pregnancy nutrition needs

Being pregnant obviously comes with specific nutrition requirements, but so does giving birth to your child and recovering from that birth. No matter how you end up delivering, your body will require energy and specific nutrients to heal itself. Eat protein foods (think meats, eggs, dairy, and beans) because they're essential for repairing your body. Include carbohydrates (especially whole grains that are high in fiber) because they're necessary for energy. Also incorporate some healthy fats (such as olive oil, nuts, and seeds) to provide important nutrients and additional energy for your body. (I share more specifics on nutrition strategies for childbirth recovery in Chapter 20).

If you decide to breast-feed your baby, plan on eating pretty much the same foods you ate while pregnant throughout the length of time you choose to nurse. Of course, you may find that you need more calories while you're nursing than you did while you were pregnant; whether you do depends on how much milk you produce. **Note:** Nursing moms may lose some of their lingering pregnancy pounds fairly quickly due to their bodies' increased calorie needs and ability to use stored fat as energy to produce milk.



If you're breast-feeding, drink plenty of fluids, get rest, and continue to take your prenatal vitamin because you can use the extra vitamins and minerals while nursing.

Getting back in shape

The key to post-pregnancy weight loss is to take it slow and steady, just as you did when gaining weight while you were pregnant. After all, you didn't gain all those pounds overnight, and they certainly won't come off that fast! As you get started, focus on eating smaller portions and leaving a few bites behind on your plate. Listen to your stomach when it tells your brain that it's satisfied and stop eating before you get overfull.



Don't give into the temptation of starving yourself after pregnancy. I know you're tired of carrying those extra pounds, but eating too little isn't good for you or your baby. Remember that your body is still recovering. If you're nursing, keep in mind that you need a good deal of calories to fuel milk production. Turn to Chapter 21 for more specific advice on how to eat for weight loss after your babe is born.



You may be surprised to find out that your pregnancy belly stays for a little while after delivery. The truth is much of your expanded stomach is actually your uterus, and it takes several weeks to shrink back to its normal size. Ignore anyone who tells you she wore her pre-pregnancy clothes home from the hospital and make sure you hang on to your elastic-banded pregnancy pants for a little while longer (or live in comfy dresses like I did for the first month).

As soon as you receive clearance from your doctor, which may take eight weeks or more if you have a cesarean (C-section) delivery, start adding exercise to your routine. Put your baby in the stroller and go for a walk, swim, pop in a yoga DVD, or attend a postnatal exercise class. Doing so will not only help you burn calories but also provide you with some much-needed stress relief and give you a nice boost of mood-elevating hormones.