

Your guide to eating well in pregnancy

Congratulations on your pregnancy!

While we all benefit from eating well, now is a time when this becomes even more important. There's lots of well-intentioned advice about eating in pregnancy. You know your baby needs nutrients to grow and develop, and it's easy to see why you also need a good diet to stay healthy for the long haul. However, there is more to healthy eating in pregnancy than just providing the essential vitamins and minerals your baby needs.

There's now good evidence that the quality of your diet during pregnancy affects your child's future health, long after they leave the womb. In the past decade, researchers have found that a mother's diet during pregnancy can

'program' her child's metabolism in both good and bad ways. A poor diet during pregnancy predisposes a child to developing obesity or diabetes when he or she is older. A good diet helps protect them. This gives us new reasons for eating well during pregnancy.

Eating for two?

While being pregnant increases your nutritional needs, the amount of extra food needed is much less than you might expect. In fact, your energy needs during the first trimester remain the same as they were before you fell pregnant and in the second and third trimester you only need around 10% more energy. However, your need for certain nutrients (such as iron) increases significantly. This means that choosing nutrient-dense foods – those that are packed with important vitamins and minerals – without overloading on kilojoules is particularly crucial in pregnancy.

Weight matters

Gaining the right amount of weight during pregnancy (not too much or too little) – is important as gaining excess weight can increase the risk of gestational diabetes (diabetes in pregnancy) and other pregnancy complications. The amount of weight you should aim to gain will depend on your weight prior to conception. If you were carrying extra weight prior to pregnancy it is safe to gain less weight during pregnancy than if you were a healthy weight at conception. You should speak to your health-care team about the appropriate weight gain targets for you.

Blood glucose levels – more than just diabetes

Unless you have been diagnosed with gestational diabetes you probably haven't given much thought to your blood glucose levels in pregnancy and the important role that they play. Glucose is the main fuel for your baby's development. If your glucose levels are too high, then your baby will grow too fast and be born with excessive amounts of body fat. This is why all pregnant women are routinely screened for gestational diabetes (usually at around 26-28 weeks but often earlier if you are at higher risk). What we now know is that even mildly raised glucose levels during pregnancy can affect your baby's risk of being overweight or developing diabetes down the track. This is why lifestyle is so important. Managing your weight, being physically active and following an eating plan that helps you manage your blood glucose levels – one with the right balance of protein and carbs (focusing on low glycemic index [GI] carbs) – is key.



The Bump to Baby Diet

LowGI EATING PLAN
FOR CONCEPTION, PREGNANCY AND BEYOND

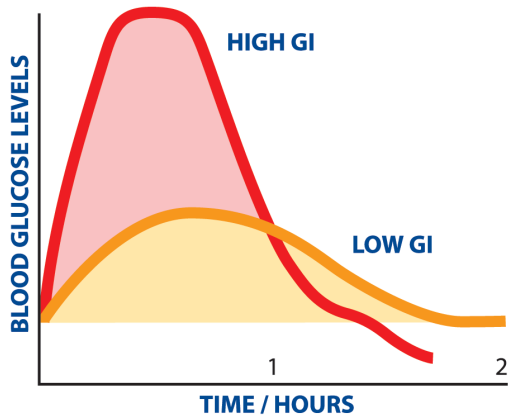


Why low GI?

The Glycemic Index (GI) is a ranking of carbohydrate foods (on a scale of 0 to 100) based on the extent to which they raise blood glucose levels after eating.

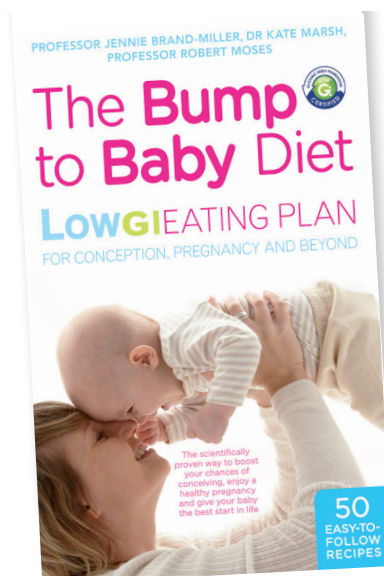
High GI foods are rapidly digested and absorbed, resulting in a fast, high rise in blood glucose levels.

Low GI foods, on the other hand, are more slowly digested and absorbed, producing a more gradual rise in blood glucose and insulin levels. This has many benefits for your health.



In pregnancy, eating a low GI diet can have benefits for your developing baby. This is because glucose is the main fuel for your baby, so your baby's growth in the womb is directly related to your own blood glucose levels. Eating high GI foods leads to spikes in your blood glucose levels after meals, which in turn means that your baby gets more glucose and grows bigger. A large baby can mean a more difficult delivery and may be at a higher risk of becoming obese and developing diabetes in the future.

Reducing the GI of your diet is one of the safest and most effective ways of ensuring the baby grows at a healthy rate. Unlike many diets, a healthy low GI eating plan is not difficult and is completely safe during pregnancy. It is not restrictive and doesn't require any major food groups or nutrients to be cut out. It benefits both mother and child.



The GI in practice

Unlike many other types of diets, following a low GI eating plan is not difficult. It is not a restrictive diet, does not cut out major food groups and is a healthy way of eating not only during pregnancy, but also generally, and is suitable for the whole family. It can be as simple as making the dietary changes below:

- choose dense wholegrain bread (e.g. Bùrger®, Helga's™ Lower Carb or Tip Top® 9 Grain™) in place of white or wholemeal
- choose steel-cut or traditional rolled oats (not quick oats) or natural muesli (e.g. Morning Sun®) in place of more processed breakfast cereals
- choose more pasta, noodles, barley, quinoa, pearl cous cous and cracked wheat in place of rice
- choose Basmati or Doongara™ in place of other varieties of rice
- include legumes (e.g. chickpeas, lentils, kidney beans, 4-bean mix) in your meals regularly
- snack on fruit, yoghurt, wholegrain fruit loaf and dried fruit-and-nut mix in place of more processed snack foods



To make shopping for a low GI diet easier, you can also look for the **certified GI Symbol**, your guarantee that a food has had its GI tested correctly, and that the food is also an all-round health choice.

The Low GI Symbol program is a not-for-profit public health initiative backed by the University of Sydney and Diabetes NSW & ACT.

For more information about low GI, the GI Symbol and the foods that carry it, visit www.gisymbol.com or 'like' us on facebook (www.facebook.com/GlycemicIndex)

Let us know how we can support you during this exciting time.

For more information on the benefits of a low GI diet in pregnancy, including meal plans and recipes, get a copy of *The Bump to Baby Diet* (Hachette e-book RRP \$11.99) or visit www.bumptobabydiet.com

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