

Diet in Pregnancy

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Every young girl dreams of becoming a mother after marriage. She looks forward to this period with the utmost hope and joy to see that her child develops well in her womb, has no birth defects and grows up well, so that she can be a proud mother of that child. To achieve that objective she is willing to do anything so that she can provide all that her growing child needs while in her womb.

Realising that they are responsible for the nutritional well being of a child who is completely dependent, every lady must utilise pregnancy as a time for making some changes in her diet in what she eats. But it may be too late if care is not taken in time as optimal nutrition actually long begins before conception. Her ovum must be normal with no defects.. If there are defects the ovum may not get incorporated. So if you are not yet pregnant but plan to be now is the time to review what is important in your diet and get yourself into tip top nutritional shape.

Calories: It is now known that the quality as well as the quantity of food which a woman eats during pregnancy can make enormous difference to the physical and mental development of her child. The total weight gain for a healthy woman during pregnancy should be 12-14 kg. Every lady needs about extra 300 calories daily to meet the requirement. These extra 300 calories can be supplied by serving of any snack like upma/poha and a cup of milk daily added to the normal diet. All requirements of growing foetus have to be supplied by the mother. For this she needs to take a balanced diet which should contain all the essential nutrients like proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins and minerals in adequate amounts.

Proteins: To meet the full requirements an addition of about 25 gms. of protein are needed per day. Since milk is essential it should be supplied in the diet. Milk also supplies vitamins and minerals. If one doesn't consume enough protein then it will result in growth retardation and/or mental deficiency in the unborn child. In order to make a diet well- balanced and palatable it is necessary to give a good quantity of milk. One can obtain balanced vegetable protein by combining beans or nuts with grains or

by combining any one of those with dairy products. A generous intake of milk and green leafy vegetables is therefore advised during pregnancy.

Furthermore many ladies are not able to take meals during pregnancy due to vomiting. Hence snacks are necessary at mid-morning, evening and at bedtime. We have observed that a helping of fruit with a cup, of milk during bed time is a very good approach to prevent early morning nausea and vomiting. In some cases it may even be desirable for the pregnant lady to take a helping of milk, or similar other preparation in night to prevent nausea.

In order to have a proper balanced diet the food should be varied and different food items should be used. This should include-

Milk- 1 litre (taken as milk or curds) She may divide it as per her own convenience or desire.

Cereals- she needs at least 6 helpings of grains either as chapati, wheat or rice. We suggest that bread should be avoided as during processing important vitamins and minerals are lost. Preparation like upma, porridge or idli may be desirable and helpful.

Pulses or beans are an important part of nutrition in Indian diet. One helping at every meal is desirable.

Vegetables- Minimum of five helpings of vegetables is desirable. One of them should be green leafy vegetables. Make an attempt to include a variety of them as each vegetable has its own quota of vitamins and minerals. Same applies to pulses. Don't restrict to only one type.

Fruits- 2-3 helpings of fruit are desirable one of these should be from a citrus variety. Although there is no objection to giving fruit juices it is desirable to eat the fruit as whole, as fibre, is lost while removing the juice.

Cooking fats- During pregnancy most of the ladies are not able to tolerate large quantity of fat. This applies particularly to ladies who have diabetes or high blood pressure. However certain amount of fats are essential for good nutrition. In order to supply variety of fat it is suggested to restrict total amount of cooking fat 1/2 to 3/4th of kg/month or 4 tsps/day. (20 gms.)

It is desirable that this should be derived only from pure ghee or coconut oil. In Indian diet the other fats that are needed are well provided by our grains and pulses and we do not need the extra amount of that from any cooking oil. However there is some deficiency of n-3 fatty acid. This can well be provided by small intakes of fish or by fish oil capsules. (2-3 capsules of any commercial preparation). However some of our patients who are vegetarian refuse to take. For them it may be desirable to take either mustard oil or flax seeds, methi seeds, extra helping of green leafy vegetables or some supplements from urad dal or black gram.

Non vegetarian preparations- It is desirable to restrict non-vegetarian foods as all the requirements of protein, calcium, phosphorus can well be supplied by milk. However those who wish to take it may take helping from fish. This can be taken daily without any objection. But other items like meat, egg, chicken, must be used sparingly.

Many ladies get a neural tube defect in babies. To avoid this every pregnant lady is prescribed folic acid. Care must be taken that extra folic acid should be supplied. This may be prior to conception.

Given below is sample menu for a pregnant lady.

Menu

Breakfast	1 cup milk (225 ml), 2 Dosas with green chutney (without coconut).
Mid Morning	1 cup milk (150 ml) + 1 sweet lime.
Lunch	1 Katori rice, 3 chapatis, 2 katori tur dal, Palak fish. (3 slices), French beans bhaji, Tossed salad.
Mid Afternoon	1 glass butter milk (made from skim milk).
Teatime	1 cup tea with 1/2 cup skim milk (75 ml), 1 katori poha with peas.
Mid evening	1 cup skim milk + 1 apple.
Dinner	Mixed vegetable soup, khichadi 2 katoris, kadhi 1½ katori, Potato cauliflower bhaji 1 katori, pumpkin raita
Bed time	1 cup milk (225 ml) & papaya (2 slices)

Nutritional Evaluation

Total Calories -- 2406 kcal.

Carbohydrate -- 371 gms.

Protein -- 102 gms.

Fat -- 51 gms.