

Key Vitamins and Minerals

Nutrient needs during the life stages of pregnancy and lactation are increased relative to women who are not pregnant or lactating. The Academy of Nutrition recommends an additional 340 calories per day during the 2nd trimester of pregnancy; 450 calories per day during the 3rd trimester; and between 400 to 500 calories per day during lactation. Besides the increased energy requirement, the needs for many micronutrients are even higher during pregnancy and lactation. The table below highlights the essential vitamins and minerals for maternal and fetus health.

RDA for Key Micronutrients During Pregnancy and Postpartum

Nutrient	Pregnancy	Lactation	Why you need it	Best Sources
Calcium	1,300 mg (14-18yo) 1,000 mg (19-50yo)	1,300 mg (14-18yo) 1,000 mg (19-50yo)	Builds strong bones and teeth	Milk, cheese, sardines, dark leafy vegetables, almonds
Iron	27 mg	10 mg (14-18yo) 9 mg (19-50yo)	Helps red blood cells deliver oxygen to fetus	Lean red meat, poultry, fish, dried beans and peas, iron-fortified cereals, prune juice
Iodine	220 µg	290 µg	Essential for healthy brain development	Iodized table salt, dairy products, seafood, meat, some breads, eggs
Choline	450 mg	550 mg	Important for development of fetus's brain and spinal cord	Milk, beef, liver, eggs, peanuts, soy products
Vitamin A	750 µg (14-18yo) 770 µg (19-50yo)	1,200 µg (14-18yo) 1,300 µg (19-50yo)	Forms healthy skin and eyesight. Helps with bone growth	Carrots, green leafy vegetables, sweet potatoes
Vitamin C	80 mg (14-18yo) 85 mg (19-50yo)	115 mg (14-18yo) 120 mg (19-50yo)	Promotes healthy gums, teeth, and bones; iron absorption	Citrus fruits, broccoli, tomatoes, strawberries
Vitamin D	600 IU	600 IU	Builds fetus's bones and teeth. Helps promote healthy eyesight and skin	Sunlight, fortified milk, fatty fish such as salmon and sardines, eggs
Vitamin B6	1.9 mg	2.0 mg	Helps form red blood cells and utilization of protein, fat, and carbohydrates by body	Beef, liver, pork, ham, whole-grain cereals, bananas

Source: Linus Pauling Institute, The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

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RDA for Key Micronutrients During Pregnancy and Postpartum (cont.)

Nutrient	Pregnancy	Lactation	Why you need it	Best Sources
Vitamin B12	2.6 µg	2.8 µg	Maintains nervous system. Helps form red blood cells	Meat, fish, poultry, milk (vegetarians should take a supplement)
Folic Acid	600 µg	500 µg	Helps prevent birth defects of the brain and spine. Supports the general growth and development of the fetus and placenta	Fortified cereal, enriched bread and pasta, peanuts, dark green leafy vegetables, orange juice, beans. Also, take a daily prenatal vitamin with 400 µg of folic acid
*Omega-3s	1.4 g (AI) from ALA 200 mg from DHA	1.3 g (AI) from ALA 200 mg from DHA	Important for brain and eye development before and after birth	ALA: flaxseed oil, chia seeds, walnuts, flaxseeds (ground), walnut oil, canola oil, soybean oil, tofu (firm). DHA: salmon, anchovies, herring, sardines, Pacific oysters, trout, and Atlantic and Pacific mackerel (not king mackerel) Women should eat at least two servings (8-12oz) of fish or shellfish per week before getting pregnant, while pregnant, and while breastfeeding. Avoid: bigeye tuna, king mackerel, marlin, orange roughy, shark, swordfish, or tilefish.

AI = Adequate Intake
 ALA = α-Linolenic Acid
 DHA = Docosahexaenoic acid

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