Weight gain in pregnancy

How much weight am I likely to gain during pregnancy?

Most women gain between 11 and 16 kg in weight during pregnancy. Of course, every woman is different and it may be perfectly normal to put on a bit less or a bit more. The amount of weight you gain is affected by factors like your height, and whether you are pregnant with more than one baby.

Your doctor or midwife might tell you that it also depends on your weight before pregnancy. If you are overweight, you should gain less weight. If you are underweight, you should gain more.

Where does the weight go?

Pregnancy is a unique time in which your body changes to meet the needs of your growing baby. Your body must store nutrients, and increase the amount of blood and other fluids it makes. Here is how much weight an average woman will gain in different parts of her body during pregnancy:

- Baby: 3.5 kg
- Amniotic fluid (the fluid around the baby): 0.9 kg
- Placenta: 0.7 kg
- Growth of your uterus (womb): 0.9 kg
- Growth of your breasts: 1.1 kg
- Increased amount of blood: 1.5 kg
- Increased amount of other body fluids: 1.1 kg
- Nutrient stores (fat and protein): 3.1 kg

How much weight should I gain?

To find out a healthy target for weight gain in pregnancy, you will need to know your Body Mass Index (BMI) calculated on your pre-pregnant weight. To work out your BMI, you can use the table below:

Calculate the BMI as:

\[
\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{weight in kg}}{\text{height in m}^2}
\]

E.g. A woman 70kg and 1.70m tall the BMI is calculated:

\[
\text{BMI} = \frac{70}{(1.7)^2} = 24.2
\]

Having a BMI from 20 to 24.9 is normal. A BMI of 25 to 29.9 means you are overweight. A person with a BMI of 30 or greater is obese.

Here is a guideline for how much weight you should gain, based on your BMI.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight status</th>
<th>BMI</th>
<th>Weight gain (kg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underweight</td>
<td>Less than</td>
<td>12.5 to 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal weight</td>
<td>18.5-24.9</td>
<td>11.5 to 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>25-29.9</td>
<td>7 to 11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obese</td>
<td>More than 30</td>
<td>5 to 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrying twins</td>
<td>18.5-24.9</td>
<td>17-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25-25.9</td>
<td>14-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 30</td>
<td>11 to 19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, if you have a BMI of 27, you should try to gain about 7 to 11.5 kg.
What are the risks of gaining too little weight?

Gaining enough weight helps your baby to grow and develop. Remember that most of your weight gain will happen after about Week 13, so don’t worry if there isn’t a lot of change in your weight early in the pregnancy.

What are the risks of gaining too much weight?

If you gain too much weight, it becomes harder to lose that weight after having your baby.

Pregnancy is a time when women are at risk of gaining a lot of extra weight. It is usual to gain a small amount of body weight after a first pregnancy, and it can take up to 1 to 2 years to return to your normal weight. However, women who gain more weight than recommended may remain overweight or obese after their baby is born. Being overweight or obese increases your risk of long-term health problems like high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease.

During the pregnancy itself, gaining too much weight can increase the risk of complications like pre-eclampsia and gestational diabetes, and make the birth more difficult.

Gaining too much weight in pregnancy may increase the risk of childhood metabolic diseases such as diabetes for your baby.

How can I gain a healthy amount of weight?

You are not eating for two! Women who are pregnant only need an extra 100 calories (420 kJ) per day. This is about the energy in two slices of bread or one egg.

Rather than quantity, it is the quality of food that is most important. Having a balanced, healthy diet is important at all times of your life, but during pregnancy it is one of the best things that you can do for yourself and your baby. Talk with your doctor or midwife about any questions you might have about eating right during pregnancy. It is safe during pregnancy to continue exercise and activity as you did prior to pregnancy and this will help you to maintain a healthy weight.

What can I do to help lose weight after my baby is born?

The most important things you can do are to exercise regularly and to eat a healthy, balanced diet. Breastfeeding for more than two months can help you to shed any extra weight. Ask your doctor or midwife about any weight loss programs that might help you after giving birth.