Have a Healthy Pregnancy

Are you expecting a baby? Concerned about weight gain, how much to eat, and how active to be? While all pregnant women should consult with their doctor for guidance on these issues, [insert name here], County Extension Agent offers these tips for expectant mothers.

Many women are concerned about weight gain during pregnancy. Weight gain should be gradual with most women gaining 2 to 4 total pounds of weight during the first trimester and then 3 to 4 pounds per month during the 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} trimester. The amount of weight a woman should gain depends on her weight before becoming pregnant. Women who are at a healthy weight (Body Mass Index of 18.5 to 24.9) should gain between 25 and 35 pounds. Weight gain values differ for women who were under or overweight before pregnancy. If you are expecting, consult with your doctor about the total amount of weight gain right for you.

A doctor will monitor your weight gain; in some cases a woman may be gaining too much or not enough weight. If you are gaining weight fast, you may need to reduce the number of calories you eat. To gain weight, you might need to eat more calories. If you need to eat fewer calories try cutting back on high calorie, low nutrient foods such as sodas, candy, desserts, whole milk, and fried foods. Instead opt for foods with less fat, sugar, and calories such as fruit, vegetables, whole grains, beans, lean meats, and low fat cheese and yogurt. If you need to eat more calories, still choose healthy versions of foods instead of items that are high in fat and sugar. In either case, women should make healthy choices from each good group.

Many people believe pregnancy means “eating for two”. While it is true women need extra calories during pregnancy, it’s not as many as you might think notes [insert name here]. In fact, most women need only 300 extra calories per day during the second and third trimester. Three hundred calories can be an extra slice of whole wheat bread, a glass of skim milk, and a piece of fruit such as an apple.

Although women should make healthy food choices during pregnancy, doctors also recommend that you take a prenatal vitamin and mineral supplement every day in addition to eating a healthy diet. Taking a supplement ensures that you and your baby have enough important nutrients like folic acid and iron. But don't overdo it. Taking extra can be harmful for you and your baby. Follow your doctor’s directions regarding use of supplements during pregnancy.

Any woman who is pregnant or many become pregnant should not drink alcohol. Drinks containing alcohol include beer, wine, liquor, mixed drinks, malt beverages, etc. Even moderate drinking during pregnancy can cause behavioral or developmental problems for a baby. Heavy drinking has even more serious consequences including malformation and mental retardation.
Many women also have questions regarding physical activity during pregnancy. Again, you should consult with your doctor on this issue. Unless your doctor advises you not to be active, you should include 30 minutes or more of physical activity such as walking or swimming on most, if not all days of the week says [insert name here]. Physical activity can even be done in short 10 minutes bouts to meet your 30 minute goal. Always avoid activities with a high risk of falling or injury, especially to the abdominal area. Examples include kickboxing, soccer, basketball, horseback riding, downhill skiing, and gymnastics.

To learn more about good nutrition and physical activity during pregnancy and to print a personalized eating plan, visit the MyPyramid for Moms website from the United States Department of Agriculture at [http://www.mypyramid.gov/mypyramidmoms/index.html](http://www.mypyramid.gov/mypyramidmoms/index.html) Also feel free to contact your local Texas AgriLife Extension Service county office at [insert contact information here].