



It's good to go NUTS when you're pregnant!

During pregnancy, your body's need for many essential nutrients significantly increases, calling for a diet that is nutritious to help keep you and your developing baby fighting fit.

Nuts, in all their forms, are highly nutritious, providing protein, fibre, essential fats and plenty of essential vitamins and minerals such as vitamin E, iron, zinc and calcium. Almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios and walnuts are like nature's own vitamin pill, all packed full of beneficial nutrients needed for good health.

There are a few nutrients in particular that need extra attention, forming the building blocks to a happy and healthy pregnancy:

1. **Folate** is a B vitamin important for your baby's neural development during the early stages of pregnancy. Snacking on hazelnuts is a great way to top up your folate intake
2. **Iron** needs increase significantly during pregnancy, as your baby takes what it needs to last through the first five to six months of life, plus you also have a greater blood volume increasing iron needs. Cashews and pine nuts can provide an iron-boost to help you meet your increased need for this mineral during pregnancy provided you also boost your vitamin C intake, which will help to absorb plant based iron.
3. **Omega 3-fats** are important for the development of the nerves, brain and eyes of your unborn baby. The best form of omega 3 is marine sources however if you are vegetarian or don't eat fish, look for omega 3 fortified foods and use a fish oil supplement. Plus, walnuts are one of the richest plant sources of omega-3 fats. Pecans, hazelnuts and macadamias also contain small quantities
4. **Calcium** is important for baby's bone development so to ensure calcium is not leached from your bones, be sure to eat adequate calcium-rich foods. These include low fat dairy products, calcium fortified soy products or even almonds. A large handful (50g) of almonds contains as much calcium as ½ cup of milk

While you're aware that good nutrition during pregnancy will help keep you and your developing baby healthy, it's important to focus on quality rather than quantity when you're eating for two,¹ as only a small amount of extra energy (kilojoules) is needed. The Royal Women's Hospital also recommends nuts as part of a healthy and nutritious diet as they can make an important contribution to pregnant women's increased nutrition needs.²

Here's a handful of healthy and nifty tips to help you include nuts in your diet:

- Team orange juice and mixed nuts with dried fruit for a high fibre, iron-boosting snack
- Toss a handful of cashews into your favourite stir fry for some extra iron! Include vitamin C-rich veggies such as capsicum, broccoli and spinach to help increase iron absorption
- Add chopped walnuts to your breakfast cereal or yoghurt to help ensure an adequate intake of omega-3 fats
- Make a folate-rich Asian salad topped with roasted pumpkin, chickpea and pistachio nuts served on baby spinach
- Layer berries, yoghurt and chopped hazelnuts and almonds in a sundae glass for a tasty iron and calcium-rich snack or dessert

Concerned about nut allergies?

There's no reason to be. The *American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)* has reviewed the clinical evidence regarding nutrition during pregnancy and breastfeeding and the development of allergies.³ They state that there is no evidence to show that what a woman eats while pregnant or breastfeeding affects the chance of their child developing an allergy. The *Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy* make the same recommendations and advise against restricted diets during pregnancy or breastfeeding, which can adversely affect the nutrition of both you and your baby.⁴

Nuts for Life wishes you a happy and healthy pregnancy - it's good to go nuts when you're pregnant!

For more information refer to the Nuts for Life Pregnancy fact sheet found at www.nutsforlife.com.au.

List of references

1. Available at <http://www.thewomens.org.au/healthyeatingforpregnancy>
2. Available at <http://www.thewomens.org.au/healthyeatingforpregnancy> accessed 7 March 2010
3. Greer FR, et al. Effects of Early Nutritional Interventions on the Development of Atopic Disease in Infants and Children: The Role of Maternal Dietary Restriction, Breastfeeding, Timing of Introduction of Complementary Foods, and Hydrolyzed Formulas. *Pediatrics*. January 1, 2008 2008;121(1):183-191.
4. The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCI). Allergy Prevention in Children <http://www.allergy.org.au/content/view/182/127/> accessed 6 may 2010

Nuts for Life is a nutrition communications initiative of the Australian Tree Nut Industry and Horticulture Australia to provide information about the nutrition and health benefits of tree nuts.

For all the latest information, facts and research on the nutrition and health benefits of nuts, and for tips and recipes to include more nuts in your day, visit www.nutsforlife.com.au and subscribe to our online newsletter *NutENews*.

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