

## NUTRITION FAQs:

### Is it safe to use sweetener or drink diet pop when I'm pregnant?

Sweeteners have never been studied to see if they are safe in pregnancy, but most have been around for a long time and no problems have been reported. So we believe that most of them are safe in small amounts.

As with all types of “junk food”, **too much is not healthy for anyone**. Sweeteners believed to be safe in pregnancy in small amounts include maltitol, mannitol, sorbitol, lactitol, isomalt, xylitol, acesulfame potassium, aspartame and sucralose.

It is not clear whether **cyclamate** (Sucaryl, Sugar Twin, Sweet 'N Low) is safe for use during pregnancy and breastfeeding. It may be best to avoid it. **Saccharin** (Hermesetas) is deemed safe by Health Canada for use during pregnancy and breastfeeding when used in moderation. But you may want to check with your doctor before you use it. Some pregnant women choose to avoid saccharin because it has been shown to cross the placenta to the fetus.

### How much vitamin D do I need in pregnancy?

The **recommended daily intake of vitamin D** for pregnant and breastfeeding women is **2000** international units (IU) per day.

**Sources** of vitamin D include:

1. **Sun exposure:** Found to be insufficient to meet our daily requirements in our northern location.
2. **Diet:** Namely fish (3 oz of salmon provides 800 IU, 3 oz of mackerel provides 400 IU), and fortified milk (100 IU per cup).
3. **Supplementation:** Most prenatal vitamins provide you with 250-400 IU of vitamin D. Vitamin D supplements, in the form of drops or tablets, can be purchased over the counter in 400 IU or 1000 IU doses.

### Is caffeine safe in pregnancy?

It is difficult for researchers to conduct good studies on this topic.

We recommend consuming **less than 200 mg of caffeine per day** as consumption in excess of this amount has been shown to have a small detrimental effect on fetal growth.

Here are some examples of **caffeine content**:

- **Brewed coffee** (8 oz) 135 mg
- **Starbucks coffee** (8 oz) 250 mg
- **Starbucks latte** (8 oz) 35 mg
- **Tea** (8 oz) 35 mg
- **Dark chocolate** (1.5 oz) 31 mg
- **Coca-Cola** (12 oz) 46 mg

What are the recommendations regarding fish consumption in pregnancy?

Health Canada recommends that pregnant women consume **150 g of fish per week**. This is equivalent to a small can of tuna. Fish provides significant amounts of **omega-3 fats** and other essential nutrients such as **vitamin D, zinc** and **iron**.

**Omega-3 fatty acids** are transferred across the placenta and play an important role in the growth and development of the infant.

Due to concerns about methyl mercury ingestion, **limit tuna** (fresh and frozen), **shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy** and **escolar** to no more than 150 grams per month. Also, **limit** intake of **canned (white) albacore tuna** to no more than 300 grams per week. **Canned light tuna**, on the other hand, is low in mercury.

Are fish oil supplements recommended in pregnancy?

Fish oil supplements are a source of **omega-3 fatty acids** if you do not consume the recommended amount of fish in your diet.

If you choose to take a fish oil supplement look for a Natural Product Number (NPN) on the product label. This shows that the fish oil supplement is government-approved for safety, efficacy, and quality.

Avoid taking **cod liver oil** in combination with a prenatal vitamin. You may take in a toxic amount of vitamin A.