

BABY FOOD

BY MELISSA SHEDDEN PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRENDAN HOMAN

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Sure, that creature on the ultrasound is super-cute, but it knows how to dine out on your dime. Scientists have found that a developing baby chews through its mum's bodily resources. But working out what you can and can't eat when preppers can make you more crazy than your lady hormones. "The minute you get pregnant, it's like someone sets up an IV drip and runs pure guilt through it. It's unnecessarily negative," says *WH* health expert Dr Ginni Mansberg. Well, it's time to chill. Whether you're planning, in the midst of morning sickness or a human milk dispenser, we've got the definitive expert-approved advice on how to give your baby the best possible start.

The expert panel



THE GP
WH health expert Dr Ginni Mansberg



THE NUTRITIONIST
WH nutrition expert Kristen Beck



THE DIETITIANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA SPOKESPERSON
Sonya Stanley



THE FERTILITY SPECIALIST
Nat Kringoudis



THE RESEARCHER
Professor Jennie Brand-Miller



Pregestation

ONE YEAR

* Forget nine months, a healthy pregnancy takes a calendar year. You need an extra three months of diet tweaks to prepare for conception, say the scientists behind The Early Life Nutrition guidelines. Need a health U-turn? "Choose just two habits each month, like starting to eat breakfast and making sure there are fats and proteins at each meal," says Kringoudis.

FOOD GROUPS

* Eat from all five food groups: wholegrains, fruit, veg, lean protein and dairy products, say the Australian Dietary Guidelines, the result of a review by an expert committee of around 55,000 scientific publications.

FOLIC ACID

* Known as folate when in foods, this B vitamin is crucial in preventing birth defects in your baby's brain and spine. Food sources include leafy green veg and fortified grain products, but the RDI is almost impossible to reach through diet alone. Beck suggests taking a 400mg folic acid supplement before you start trying.

MICRONUTRIENTS

* Preconception is not the time for trying the 5:2 or other elimination diets. "Restricting energy can also restrict nutrients, which may cause adverse pregnancy outcomes," Brand-Miller explains.

CAFFEINE

* Can't say so long to your 10am latte? "Small amounts of caffeine are safe during pregnancy but excessive cups may increase miscarriage and premature birth risks," says Stanley. Stick to less than 200mg per day. That's one to two espressos, three cups of instant or four cups of tea.

Eat like a daddy

* If your fella's swimmers need priming, add two of each of these zinc- and folate-rich foods daily to his diet, says *Men's Health* nutrition adviser Alan Aragon.

ZINC*

Beef

85g = 5mg

Pork

85g = 3mg

Dark-meat chicken

85g = 2.5mg

Cashews

15 nuts = 1.6mg

Chickpeas

85g = 1.3mg

FOLATE

Spinach (raw)

1 cup = 60mcg

Asparagus

4 stalks = 90mcg

Brussels sprouts

½ cup = 78mcg

Avocado

½ cup = 60mcg

Orange juice

1 cup = 45mcg

*Serving size, nutrient amount



1ST

trimester
(weeks 1 to 13)

DIETARY ENERGY

* No need (or excuse) to binge. "During this stage there are no additional energy requirements," says Stanley. See an accredited practicing dietitian for individual advice.

MORNING SICKNESS

* Riding the porcelain train? Combat nausea by eating small amounts of odourless foods. "Paleo followers are going to hate this," says Beck, "but wholegrain toast (plain or with Vegemite) is a lifesaver when you can't face much else." See p143 for more tips.

ALCOHOL

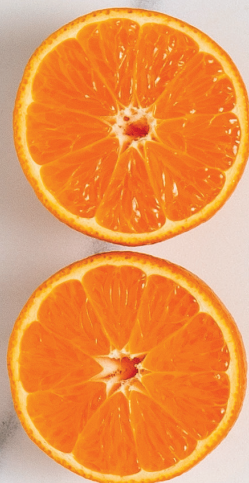
* Park the pinot. The Australian Dietary Guidelines for women who are pregnant, planning or breastfeeding, say that not drinking alcohol is the safest option.

BEWARE BACTERIA

* Take extra care preparing and storing food, due to the potential for listeria monocytogenes bacteria, says Mansberg. "No pre-prepared salads, dairy that's not pasteurised, soft cheeses, cold cuts, smoked salmon or raw eggs." The Australian Dietary Guidelines for Pregnancy advise avoiding food if it has been prepared more than 24 hours ago. For safe leftovers, always reheat to steaming hot; above 74°C for over two minutes.

DEAL WITH BLOCKAGES

* Raised progesterone slows digestive movements, says Beck. "The best way to deal with constipation is to increase fibre intake through five servings of veg and two of fruit, whole grains and legumes, plus drinking more water."



2ND

trimester
(weeks 14 to 28)

EATING FOR TWO

* Don't actually double your food intake (dammit). "It's a small increase you need," says Mansberg, "If you're already above the healthy BMI range, then your body can use some of its existing reserves. But if you're already eating healthily don't worry about tuna salad versus salmon salad. Eat according to your appetite."

PROTEIN

* It builds new tissue for the placenta and for your baby's liver, lungs, brain, fat and muscle. "The recommended daily intake during the second and third trimesters is 60 grams," says Beck. Think 3.5 servings of lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts, seeds or legumes as well as 2.5 servings of dairy products.

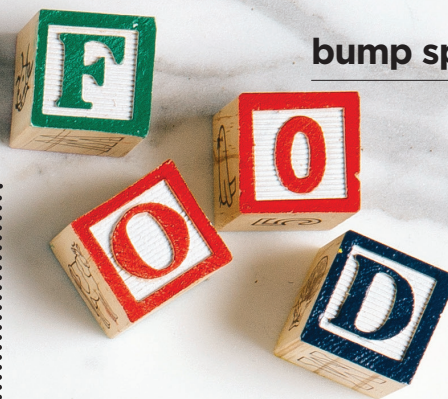
IRON

* You need 27mg a day (9mg more than usual). The mineral makes more blood to supply the baby with oxygen. "Animal sources of iron are readily absorbed by the body. For better absorption of iron from plant foods, include a good source of vitamin C at the same time, such as oranges," says Stanley.



3RD

trimester
(weeks 29 to BDay)



CRAVINGS

* Baby wants drive-through? Not really. "Giving in to the idea that your cravings are real and biological is dangerous. The reality is, when you're not pregnant you have cravings, we all do. But you don't validate them," says Mansberg. *WH* tip: swap the fast food fries for homemade sweet potato chips baked in a little coconut oil and sprinkled with paprika instead.

WHOLEFOODS

* You know they're the go, but how to track your intake? "Look at your receipt," advises Brand-Miller. "Fruit and veg and plain simple unprocessed foods don't attract GST. So it's a guide to how much of your food is processed and how much is not," she says.

UP THE IRON

* As your pregnancy progresses and your baby grows, both of your nutritional needs change. "The more advanced you are, the more likely you are to become iron deficient," says Mansberg. Vegos take note: "Red meat is the best source. You can get iron from leafy vegetables like spinach, the problem is it's not very well absorbed, so you need to eat a lot of it to get the same benefits." An iron supplement or injection is another option.

CALCIUM

* Until 2006, Australian dietary recommendations advised increased calcium intake, but this has been revised. "Although your baby has a high requirement during this stage, as it starts to develop and strengthen bones, your increased capacity to absorb dietary calcium makes up for this loss without extra intake," says Stanley. Get your daily 1000mg from milk, yoghurt, cheese, sardines, fortified foods and drinks, kale and bok choy. A 250ml glass of milk has about 300mg.

VITAMIN D AND A

* Not getting enough? Inadequate vitamin D intake has been linked to bacterial vaginosis, gestational diabetes, pre-eclampsia and decreased bone mass in offspring. Getting 15 minutes of sun every second day will top up your reserves. "And avoid vitamin A supplements, as excessive intake may cause deformities," says Beck.

GO FISH

* Not all fish are good right now. Deep sea types have high levels of mercury, a heavy metal that can be harmful to an unborn baby's brain, kidneys and nervous system. "If consuming shark, flake, marlin or swordfish, have no more than one serve (100g cooked) per fortnight and no other fish that fortnight," says Beck. Types of fish high in omega-3 fatty acids that don't pose a mercury risk are salmon, mackerel and sardines.



Breastfeeding

IODINE

* “From the minute you conceive to the minute you stop breastfeeding, take 150mcg of iodine per day to help your baby’s brain grow properly,” says Mansberg. Additionally, Beck suggests: “Make sure your salt is iodised and choose iodine-rich foods like dairy, seafood, potatoes and seaweed.”

LIFT LESS IRON

* “You can reduce your iron intake to 10mg per day, assuming exclusive breastfeeding and no regular menstruation,” says Beck.

ENERGY INTAKE

* The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend breastfeeding women consume about 20 per cent more kilojoules (about 2000kJ a day). “Breastfeeding is a diet in disguise. One litre of breastmilk requires about 2900 kilojoules,” says Brand-Miller. Don’t do as the A-listers do, warns Beck, “Losing weight too quickly or exercising too intensely can jeopardise your breastmilk production in the first few weeks.”

BLOOD TONICS

* You’ve parted with your placenta, so eat blood tonics such as leafy greens, which are rich in chlorophyll and beetroot, says Kringoudis. The molecular structure of chlorophyll is similar to human blood and studies show, when consumed, it increases the production of haemoglobin, which means more oxygen-rich blood, helping cells thrive. “One of the Chinese medicine remedies is ham hock soup. It’s nourishing and warm, which is ideal,” says Kringoudis.

ON THE BOTTLE

* Before you toast bringing your mini-me into the world, know this: the amount of alcohol in your breastmilk will be almost the same as in your blood. “Alcohol is a toxin to every tissue in the body, so it’s best to avoid while breastfeeding,” says Brand-Miller. Keep baby drinking milk only. **WH**

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The grams of protein needed daily by breastfeeding mothers, according to a study by Ohio State University.

