

Prenatal Nutrition



There is no more important time for you to think about what you are eating than when you are expecting a baby. Being pregnant puts many extra demands on your body. These demands require extra nutrients to meet the needs of your growing baby and to keep yourself healthy during and after pregnancy.

Eating healthy while pregnant may help prevent:

- Pregnancy difficulties
- Delivery problems
- Birth defects
- Low birth weight babies
- Future health problems for you and your baby

To get the best nutrients for you and your baby choose healthy foods from the five food groups. The following nutrients are especially important for pregnant women:

- **Protein** is very important for your increased needs and the growth of your baby. The best sources of protein are lean meats, dried beans, lentils, nuts, eggs, and cheese.
- **Calcium** is in great demand for your baby's bones and teeth. If there is not enough calcium in your diet it will be taken from your bones and may increase your risk of developing osteoporosis, a disease in which bones become weak and break easily. The best sources of calcium are milk and other dairy products such as cheese and yogurt. Other sources of calcium include dark green vegetables, tofu, and calcium-fortified foods such as certain types of orange juice (read the label). You should aim to get three servings of dairy products each day.
- Extra **iron** is also important for you and your baby. During pregnancy your baby is storing iron they will need to be healthy after they are born. The best sources of iron are red meat, enriched whole grains, green leafy vegetables, legumes, eggs, and dried fruit. To increase iron absorption, eat foods high in vitamin C when eating iron-rich foods.

Know how. Know **now**.

- **Folic acid** is a very important nutrient both before and during pregnancy to assist with cell development. Folic acid may help prevent birth defects such as spina bifida. The best sources of folic acid are dark green leafy vegetables, dried beans, lean meat, oranges and whole-grain fortified breads and cereals. It is recommended that women of child-bearing age get at least 400 micrograms of folic acid each day. If you are pregnant, you need at least 600 micrograms of folic acid each day.
- **Water** and other liquids are important while pregnant. It is important to stay hydrated to prevent premature labor.
- **Fruits and vegetables** contain many important nutrients and fiber. It is important to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables.

Tips on how to eat more fruits and vegetables:

- 🍏 Try to include fruits and/or vegetables with every meal.
- 🍏 Include fresh fruit with breakfast.
- 🍏 Take fruit and/or vegetables with you for snacks.
- 🍏 Eat a side salad with lunch.
- 🍏 Make a fruit and yogurt smoothie for dessert.

Broccoli-Chicken Casserole

Makes 6 servings



- 1 (8 ounce) package of egg noodles**
- 3 cups cooked chicken or turkey**
- 1 (10 ounce) package frozen broccoli spears (thawed and drained)**
- ½ cup sliced onion**
- ½ cup milk**
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup**
- ½ cup cheese (shredded)**

1. Preheat oven to 350° F.
2. Cook noodles as directed by package and drain.
3. Mix noodles, broccoli, onion and chicken in a mixing bowl.
4. Mix together soup, milk and cheese in separate bowl; stir into the noodle mixture.
5. Pour all ingredients into a lightly greased 9 x 13 casserole dish.
6. Bake at 350° F for 40 to 45 minutes or until thoroughly heated.

Nutrition Information per Serving (1 cup): 370 calories, 11 g fat, 4 g saturated fat, 100 mg cholesterol, 480 mg sodium, 36 g carbohydrates, 3 g fiber, 2 g sugar, 31 g protein, vitamin A 15%, vitamin C 60%, calcium 15%, iron 15%