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# Pre & Post-Natal Nutrition

By Alyssa Schottland-Bauman



You're pregnant. Yippee. Congratulations. Whether it's your first time expecting or blessed to experience it again, if there ever was a time to get on that health kick you've been meaning to start, now is the time. Not only for your own well-being, both physically and mentally, but also for the miracle you are growing. It is a marvel to think about how your body can grow another being inside you; almost unfathomable when you think about all the intricacies. And to do so, your body needs all the nutrition it can get.

## Make Those Calories Count

Every calorie counts when growing baby. So sorry to break the news, but now is not the time to double up on the cake. (Is there ever a good time for that?) And that extra slice of pizza will only make losing the baby weight even harder. The whole idea of eating for two, well, that's not exactly accurate. Every woman has different caloric needs, but the average woman should consume between 1,500 to 2,000 calories a day. During the first trimester, unless you are underweight from the get-go, there is no need to increase your calorie consumption at all—I know, shocking.

During the second and third trimesters, believe it or not, the body only needs an extra 200 to 400 calories to support optimal growth and also to avoid excess weight gain (you want the extra weight gain to be baby bulking up, not mama). Those 200 to 400 extra calories really aren't much when you think about it. It's an apple with some nut butter, or an extra piece of toast with some hummus or bean spread on top. It's essential during this nine-month journey to make every calorie count. So let's make sure that almost everything you eat (occasional indulgences are necessary, after all) is nutritionally dense. Do this by adding in healthier choices to crowd out the high caloric nutrient void.

## So What's the Plan?

Six to 10 servings of complex carbohydrates: Crowd out the white bread, white pasta, white rice and other refined carbohydrates (packaged foods) by adding in 100% whole grains. This means brown rice, whole grain pasta, quinoa, millet, oats, spelt, amaranth, barley and other ancient grains. Look for 100% whole grain breads. Experiment with sprouted grain breads.

Two to four servings of fruit and three to five servings of vegetables: Increase fruit and vegetable consumption. Try to add a little more green to every meal. Greens are the most missing ingredient from our North American plates and they pack in the nutrients and health benefits. Dark leafy greens are high in calcium, magnesium, iron, potassium, phosphorous, zinc and vitamins A, C, E and K, and these tasty leaves are crammed with fibre, folic acid, chlorophyll and many other micronutrients and phyto-chemicals. And baby likes that. Avocados are also a super healthy, nutrient dense choice. They are a great source of mono-unsaturated fatty acids, the good fat that baby needs, while a huge source of lutein, fibre, folate, Vitamins B, E and C.

Two to three servings of dairy: If dairy works for you, choose low fat cheeses (pasteurized only), milks and yogurts. Try to crowd out sweetened yogurts (high in nutrient-void calories) by eating plain yogurt. Sweeten it yourself by sprinkling with natural sweeteners like honey, fruit (berries and bananas), and nut pieces (high in nutrients and protein too). If dairy doesn't work for you, here is another opportunity to get your calcium needs from greens.

Two to three servings of protein: Lean meats like chicken and fish are always the healthier options. Completely avoid high-mercuric fish like swordfish, marlin and shark, and limit tuna consumption. Wild salmon is the best choice as it is an excellent source of omega-3 essential fatty acids, essential for optimal foetal brain development. Limit processed deli meats to a minimum, as they are loaded with nitrates. Baby doesn't like them. Beans, lentils and nuts are great sources of plant protein packed with antioxidants and fibre. Add these health-boosting sources by substituting them in place of meat. For example: Add beans to salads instead of the usual chicken.

It is a good idea to limit sweets, unhealthy fats and oils. That being said, a little bit of indulgence satisfies another part of who we are and it is essential we don't deprive ourselves of this pleasure either.

## Going Organic

Remember everything you ingest, baby gets, too. So not only is baby benefitting from all the goodness in these healthy choices, but baby is also getting the toxins, pesticides, herbicides, antibiotics, and extra hormones that are unfortunately in some of our food. And baby's growing brain and body isn't developed enough to handle the added stresses. Keep them to a minimum by going organic. Now is the time to make the switch, especially when it comes to fruits, vegetables, meats and dairy.

## Breastfeeding

Baby is here and you are probably overjoyed with love, high-flying emotions, anxiety and everything else that may come from post-pregnancy. Eating healthy can help to keep hormones in check. And if you are breastfeeding, you are probably starving all the time. Feeding baby every three hours is a huge job, burning over 600 calories a day. So forget about what your jeans are saying, now is not the time to diet, as it could interfere with breast milk production.

Some women need an extra 300 to 400 calories daily depending on pregnancy weight gain. Again, extra calories should come from nutrient dense foods. Breastfeeding might even expedite weight loss, as it helps to burn fat reserves laid down during pregnancy. It is important to manage your expectations. It took nine months for you to gain the weight. It will take some time to lose it. You are not going to walk out of the hospital at a pre-pregnancy weight. But if you continue to make the above healthy choices, combined with moderate exercise, the excess baby weight will naturally melt off.

## Supplements

Taking folic acid and a multivitamin ensures optimal health during preconception, pregnancy and breastfeeding. And even if we are eating as healthily as possible, pregnancy and breastfeeding takes so much out of the body that it could deplete certain essential vitamins and minerals. An omega-3 essential fatty acid, vitamin D and iron are supplements to consider. ■

*Alyssa Schottland-Bauman is founder of Nourished {from within} (nourished.ca), a health consulting firm. She instills long-lasting lifestyle tools in women who are starved for time and hungry for balance. She believes the modern woman can do it all, and she shows them how, from nutrition to self-expression.*

## Kale Chips — a super-healthy snack

### Ingredients

- 2-3 bunches of kale, stemmed and chopped into chip size pieces. (I like green kale in this recipe)
- 2 tbsps. olive oil
- Pinch of Gomasio (mix of sesame seeds, seaweed and sea salt)
- 2 pinches of nutritional yeast (Optional, but it's a great add-on here. It contains 18 amino acids, and is a complete protein, rich in vitamin B and other trace elements.)

### Method

Preheat oven to 400. In big mixing bowl, massage washed dry kale with olive oil. Add spices. Mix. Lay flat on parchment-lined baking sheets. Put in oven for 8-10 minutes until crispy and fragrant. Serve lukewarm or cool.