

# Cystic Fibrosis all about nutrition

## Nutrition and pregnancy in cystic fibrosis

With thanks to members of the Cystic Fibrosis Dietitians Group (CFDGUK) for preparing the information in this leaflet.

# Nutrition and pregnancy in cystic fibrosis

## Contents

Introduction	3
What should I be eating?	3
What is a healthy weight gain?	3
Do I need to take any vitamin or mineral supplements?	3
Folic Acid	3
Iron	3
Vitamin A	4
Vitamin D	4
Are there any foods I should avoid whilst pregnant?	4
Do I need to limit my caffeine intake?	5
Peanuts	5
Alcohol	5
Coping with the symptoms of pregnancy	5
I am struggling to gain weight, how can I add extra nourishment to my diet?	6
Oral Glucose Tolerance Test (OGTT)	6
CF-related diabetes	6

## Introduction

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As you may already know good nutrition is vital if you have cystic fibrosis (CF). This helps you maintain a good weight and reduces the risk of developing chest infections. During pregnancy your body needs more energy and nutrients for your baby to grow and develop, and for your body to cope with the changes taking place.

## What should I be eating?

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It is important to eat a variety of foods, including:

- Starchy foods such as bread, potatoes, pasta, rice and cereals. Try to include these in every meal.
- Protein-rich foods such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, beans and lentils. Try to include these in at least two meals a day.
- Dairy foods such as milk, cheese and yoghurts. Try to include these in at least three meals or snacks a day.
- Fruit and vegetables. Include a variety of fresh, frozen, dried or canned fruit and vegetables in your meals and snacks daily.

## What is a healthy weight gain?

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Good weight gain during pregnancy is important, as this will reduce the risk of a premature birth or a baby with a low birth weight. If you are underweight at the start of your pregnancy, your dietitian can support you in gaining some weight. Weight gain in pregnancy varies greatly but most occurs in the second half of pregnancy.

## Do I need to take any vitamin or mineral supplements?

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### Folic acid

Folic acid has been shown to reduce the risk of neural tube defects (NTD) such as spina bifida. If you didn't take folic acid supplements before getting pregnant you should start taking them as soon as you find out you are pregnant. You should take a folic acid supplement of 400 micrograms each day until the 12th week of pregnancy. If you have previously had a pregnancy affected by NTD or are considered to be at higher risk, for example if you have diabetes, it is recommended that you take a supplement of five milligrams each day.

### Iron

Pregnant women can become low in iron. Choosing plenty of iron-rich foods such as red meats, pulses, breads, green vegetables and fortified breakfast cereals can help to prevent this. Try to have some food or drink that contains vitamin C, such as a glass of fruit juice, at the same time as an iron-rich meal because this will help your body absorb the iron.

## Vitamin A

It is important to continue to take your CF-specific vitamin supplements, which will include vitamin A. Your CF team will monitor your vitamin A levels and advise on supplementation.

## Vitamin D

If you normally take a vitamin D supplement, please continue taking it. If you are not already taking a vitamin D supplement, then it is recommended that you take one containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D each day.

If you have any questions about vitamins and minerals, please ask your dietitian, pharmacist or doctor.

## Are there any foods I should avoid whilst pregnant?

There are certain foods you should avoid whilst you are pregnant because they may contain high levels of listeria. This is a bacteria that can cause miscarriage, still birth or severe illness in a newborn baby. The following list of foods should be avoided:

- Soft, mould-ripened cheese, such as camembert, brie and blue-veined cheese. There is no risk with hard cheese, cottage cheese, cream cheese and processed cheese.
- Liver and liver products.
- Paté (any type, including vegetable).
- Uncooked or undercooked ready-prepared meals. Ensure you heat ready-prepared meals until they are piping hot all the way through.
- Unpasteurised cheeses or dairy products.

**As well as avoiding the foods listed above, the following advice should be followed.**

- Avoid eating shark, swordfish or marlin as these fish can contain higher levels of mercury. At high levels, mercury can harm your baby's developing nervous system.
- Only eat meat that has been well cooked. Take particular care with sausages and minced meat.
- Reduce the risk of salmonella, which causes a type of food poisoning. If eggs have the "red lion" stamp they are safe to eat in foods containing raw or partially-cooked eggs. Eggs that do not have the "red lion" stamp should only be eaten when cooked until both the white and the yolk are solid.
- Wash your hands after handling raw meat, and keep raw foods separate from ready-to-eat foods.
- Wear gloves and wash your hands afterwards if you are changing cat litter or gardening. This is to prevent toxoplasmosis which can be harmful to unborn babies. The toxoplasmosis parasite is found in cat faeces and soil.

**For further advice on what foods you need to be cautious with or avoid during pregnancy, please see the NHS Choices website – [www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/foods-to-avoid-pregnant](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/foods-to-avoid-pregnant)**

## Do I need to limit my caffeine intake?

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There are some risks to pregnancy associated with a high caffeine intake. It is important to have no more than 200 milligrams (mg) of caffeine each day.

**The following is a list of the caffeine content of some food and drinks:**

- Mug of instant coffee - 100mg
- Mug of filter coffee - 140mg
- Mug of tea - 75mg
- Can of cola - 40mg
- Can of energy drink - 80mg
- 50g plain chocolate - 25mg
- 50g milk chocolate - 10mg

Although the risks are low, high intakes of caffeine could lead to low birth weight or miscarriage. To reduce your caffeine intake try decaffeinated tea and coffee, fruit juice or caffeine-free soft drinks.

## Peanuts

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If you would like to eat peanuts or peanut-containing foods, you can do so unless you are allergic to them or a health professional advises you not to.

In the past, pregnant women were told to avoid nuts if there was a history of allergy in the baby's immediate family. This advice has now changed. There is no clear evidence that eating peanuts during pregnancy affects the chances of your baby developing a peanut allergy.

## Alcohol

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It is not known what level of alcohol consumption is safe for pregnant women. Therefore, many experts agree that you should avoid alcohol during pregnancy.

## Coping with the symptoms of pregnancy

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Hopefully you will not experience these, but if you do here are some tips.

### Morning sickness

Morning sickness is quite common in the early stages of pregnancy. It is important that you try to maintain a high caloric intake.

- Eat dry bread or a biscuit before getting out of bed in the morning.
- Eat a carbohydrate-rich snack every two to three hours such as a scone, toast or a teacake.
- Avoid drinking liquids with meals.
- Avoid large meals.
- Avoid highly-spiced foods, such as hot curries.
- Consume food or drinks containing ginger.

## Heartburn

Heartburn is common in the third trimester.

- Avoid large meals. Try to have several small meals and snacks instead.
- Avoid long periods without eating. Ensure you eat regularly.
- Sit down while eating and avoid rushing meals.
- Avoid an excessive intake of tea, coffee and fizzy drinks.
- Avoid lying down after eating.

## Constipation

Your dietitian can give you specific advice regarding this but drinking plenty of fluids throughout the day can help with this.

## I am struggling to gain weight, how can I add extra nourishment to my diet?

- Use ordinary margarine or butter rather than low-fat spread. Spread generously on bread and toast and add to potatoes and vegetables.
- Fry foods in oil rather than grill to give more energy.
- Add single, double or whipped cream to puddings, drinks, sauces and soups.
- Eat ice cream, pastry dishes, crumbles, trifles and mousses as a dessert or as a snack.
- Prepare rice or pasta dishes with meat and cheese sauces.
- Use full-fat dairy products, including full-fat milk, creamy yoghurts and full-fat cheese.

### Snack ideas:

- Scones with cheese or jam and cream
- Houmous or creamy dips with vegetable sticks, such as carrots, pepper or cucumber
- Fruit salad with cream or ice cream
- Full-fat yoghurts or fromage frais
- Individual trifles and puddings
- Slices of quiche or pizza
- Toast with toppings of butter, jam, chocolate spread, peanut butter or cheese
- Crisps and savoury snacks
- Chocolate or cream-filled biscuits

## Oral Glucose Tolerance Test (OGTT)

During your pregnancy, you may receive regular tests to look at your blood sugar levels: one in the first trimester and another at 24-28 weeks. This test is really important because too much sugar in your blood can affect your baby's development.

## CF-related diabetes

If you have CF-related diabetes (CFRD), it is really important that you keep good control of your blood glucose levels to keep you and your baby healthy. Both your CF team and your diabetes team will support you with this.

# Cystic Fibrosis Trust

**This leaflet has been designed to be given out by a CF dietitian, along with their advice. If you downloaded or requested it directly from the Cystic Fibrosis Trust we would advise you to discuss this information with your CF dietitian.**

**The information in this leaflet is based on clinical best practice and a consensus of opinion by dietitians within the CFDGUK. For detailed guidance on CF nutrition, please see the 'Consensus document on nutritional management of cystic fibrosis', published September 2016. View our consensus documents here [cysticfibrosis.org.uk/publications](http://cysticfibrosis.org.uk/publications).**

The Cystic Fibrosis Trust provides information about cystic fibrosis through our factsheets, leaflets and other publications. Most of our publications can be downloaded from our website [cysticfibrosis.org.uk/publications](http://cysticfibrosis.org.uk/publications) or ordered from our helpline.

Our helpline can help you with a range of issues, no matter how big or small. Our trained staff can provide a listening ear, practical advice, welfare/benefits information or direct you to other sources of support. The helpline is open Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm, and can be contacted on 0300 373 1000 or at [helpline@cysticfibrosis.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cysticfibrosis.org.uk).