

A Weighty Issue

Weight is a sensitive subject for many women even when they're not expecting. Add the raging hormones of pregnancy into the mix and we may need to be talked off the ledge. Fortunately, when it comes to the notion of eating for two there is plenty of sound advice out there.

According to the Institute of Medicine, if you're planning to have a family but aren't yet expecting, the best course of action is to make sure you're at a healthy weight before you get pregnant. Being either underweight or overweight poses risks to both mother and child, with obesity during pregnancy raising the potential for backaches, leg pain, varicose veins, high blood pressure, gestational diabetes and increased risk of cesarean delivery in mothers-to-be.

Reality is, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 35 percent of women in this country fall into the obese category. That statistic has spurred new guidelines for the amount of weight American women should gain during pregnancy.

Figuring weight categories by measuring body mass index (BMI), the revised pregnancy weight gain guidelines are as follows:

- Underweight women (BMI less than 18.5): 28 to 40 pounds
- Normal weight women (BMI 18.5 to 24.9): 25 to 35 pounds
- Overweight women (BMI 25 to 29.9): 15 to 25 pounds
- Obese women (BMI 30 or above): 11 to 20 pounds

The American Pregnancy Association says, "Throughout your pregnancy the goal is to keep weight gain as steady as possible because your baby requires a daily supply of nutrients that comes from what you eat." That should equate to roughly a pound a week in your second and third trimesters for women who fall within the normal weight range at the start of their pregnancy.

According to WebMD, "It is not necessary to eat for two during pregnancy. It's true that you need extra calories from nutrient-rich foods to help your baby grow, but you generally need to consume only 100 to 300 more calories than you did before you became pregnant to meet the needs of your growing baby."

The key is to be healthy and make sure the food you're eating is good for both you and the tot in your tummy. While cravings are a typical part of pregnancy and it's okay to indulge once in a while, you may have to tell yourself to step away from the chocolate éclair if it continues to call your name from behind the glass at your neighborhood deli. And don't go it alone; make sure you consult with your baby doctor. The pregnancy weight guidelines are just that, guidelines, and the amount of weight you should gain can vary based on your individual circumstances. Talking with your doctor and setting out a weight gain plan for your pregnancy should allow

you to set any worry over excess poundage aside and concentrate on the joy of the miracle of life.