

Sweet talk on pregnancy and childhood

How can low calorie sweeteners help?



Pregnancy is a time when women need to give special attention to their bodies, aware of the new life developing inside them.

There is increasing evidence to show that a healthy balanced diet, normal body weight and a lifestyle that includes gentle exercise, are all key to the health of both mother and baby. For women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, being overweight or obese can result in some serious problems such as:

Consequences of being overweight in women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy

Impaired fertility



Complications during pregnancy such as gestational diabetes



Increased weight retention post-partum



Increased health risks to the child both during pregnancy and after delivery

Managing and understanding weight gain during pregnancy



Breasts: 0.45-0.91 kg

Baby: 2.72-3.63 kg

Placenta: 0.45-0.91 kg

Uterus: 0.45-0.91 kg

Amniotic fluid: 0.45-0.91 kg

Your blood: 1.36-1.81 kg

Your protein and fat storage:
3.63-4.54 kg

Your body fluids: 1.36-1.81 kg

Total weight gain:
11.34-15.88 kg

Typical weight gain during pregnancy and component factors³

The management of one's body mass index (BMI) prior to conception and throughout the course of pregnancy are critical to ensure both a healthy pregnancy and a reduction in the risk of complications^{1,2}. Under these circumstances, low calorie sweeteners, and the 'light' foods containing them, can help healthy meal planning and contribute to good wellbeing during pregnancy.

One misconception about food consumption during pregnancy which may fuel excessive weight gain is the "eating for two" myth. Adding 200–300 calories to their regular diets during the second and third trimesters is enough for most women to support their baby's growth and development³.

The WHO estimated that in 2005 there were 1.6 billion overweight and 400 million obese adults⁴, with the rate of obesity during pregnancy reported to be between 18 and 38%.

The benefits of a healthy diet and exercise during pregnancy

Pregnancy can be associated with cravings for sweeter foods^{5,6,7}. This reflects the need for more calories to support the development of a growing foetus during pregnancy, and is driven by the normal hormonal fluctuations which occur during this time.

Low calorie sweeteners and foods can help women keep to a healthy diet without the risk of side effects during pregnancy^{8,9,10}. There is good evidence to support that substituting low calorie sweeteners for sugar in foods and beverages can help people regulate their calorie intake because



they don't feel deprived and have the satisfaction of tasty foods. Women who are considering becoming pregnant should talk to their healthcare professional about optimal nutrition (normally a diet containing a wide range of different foods) to support the demands of development of their unborn child¹¹.

Regular exercise is another important part of healthy pregnancy, and there are various kinds of exercise that can help mothers-to-be remain active, and improve their health and wellbeing throughout the months before they give birth¹².

Promoting a balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle in childhood

Children need lots of nutrients to support the demands of their developing bodies and brains. Most children are physically very active and, as a rule, their energy balance (the amount of calories they take in versus the amount they burn) favours enough weight gain to keep pace with their increasing height and body mass. A balanced diet that includes a selection of foods from all the different groups can supply the right amount of energy and nutrients to help a child keep going.

Daily life has changed for kids as well as adults, who now have easy access to energy-dense foods. More kids are gaining excess weight, and childhood obesity is becoming a major public health problem, storing up future risks to health in adulthood and even the teen years³.

Simple ways to get kids back on track to the right weight:

- an active lifestyle
- awareness of healthy eating
- getting enough nutrients
- portion size



Foods like whole grains, fat-free dairy and lean meat or fish are good substitutes for everyday foods with higher calorie and fat content, while diet drinks and food sweetened with low calorie sweeteners add variety, good taste and the satisfaction of eating treats, all while limiting additional calories.

Infants and young children up to the age of three years have nutritional needs that are met by breast (or formula) milk in early life and 'baby foods'; low calorie sweeteners are not approved for use in these foods. After three years of age, children can have foods and drinks with low calorie

sweeteners, but their diet should meet all their nutritional requirements. Extensive research at international level has shown that low calorie sweeteners are safe for children and that the amounts they consume are well below the ADIs set by the authorities^{8,13,14}.

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Speak to your doctor or health practitioner for further information on pregnancy and childhood.

Visit our website www.sweeteners.org for further information on low calorie sweeteners.