



Sweet talk on pregnancy

How can low/no calorie sweeteners help?

Pregnancy is a time when women need to give special attention to the extra demands their body has, aware of the new life growing inside them. Eating well is one of the best ways by which women can take good care of themselves and their unborn child.¹ Staying physically active is also key for a healthy weight gain during pregnancy.²

Eating well in pregnancy

Good nutrition in pregnancy means achieving a balance between getting enough nutrients to support the growth of the foetus and achieving a healthy weight gain.¹ In practice, it is about following a diet with a wide variety of healthy foods that provide adequate intake of energy (calories), protein, good fat, whole grains and fibre, vitamins and minerals, while containing low amounts of saturated fat, salt and sugar.³

Eating well to ensure women cover the energy their body needs during pregnancy is key, but there's no necessity to "eat for two", as the popular saying suggests.³ Adding approximately 300 calories to their regular diet during the second and third trimesters is enough for most women to support their baby's growth and development without risking adding more weight than recommended.¹

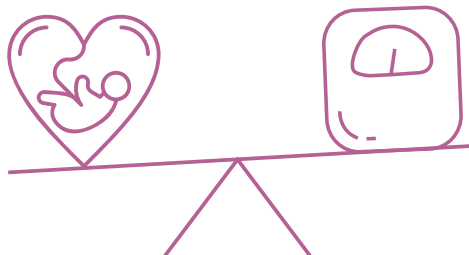
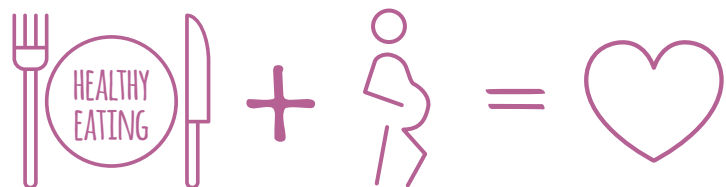
As part of a healthy diet and lifestyle, low/no calorie sweeteners used in place of sugar can offer alternative food and drink choices that still taste sweet and at the same time have fewer or zero calories.



Managing body weight before, during and after pregnancy

Pregnant women living with obesity are at greater risk of pregnancy-related complications. Maternal obesity may also affect offspring health during childhood and later adult life.⁴ That is why recommendations encourage all women of childbearing age to optimise their body weight before getting pregnant.⁵

Equally, ensuring a healthy weight gain during pregnancy is important for a healthy baby and for lowering the risk of complications such as gestational diabetes, high blood pressure, preeclampsia and preterm birth.⁶ Healthy eating and staying physically active during pregnancy can help women to stay healthy and to prevent excessive gestational weight gain and related complications.⁷ Similarly, these are the right strategies for a successful postpartum weight loss.⁸



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Low/no calorie sweeteners intake during pregnancy

Pregnant women who are at risk of gaining excess weight or are living with obesity should aim to manage their calorie intake. Among a pool of dietary strategies, low/no calorie sweeteners can help replace calories from sugar in the diet and thus reduce overall energy intake as they provide no, or practically no calories. In turn, this can help in managing body weight.⁹

Pregnancy can also be associated with cravings for sweet foods.¹⁰ Replacing sugar with low/no calorie sweeteners as part of a healthy diet can help pregnant women keep enjoying in moderation sweet-tasting foods or beverages with lower or zero caloric content. This substitution can likely help women in pregnancy feel less deprived and more satisfied with their diets.

Low/no calorie sweeteners can also be a useful tool for women with gestational diabetes, who may also experience cravings more often. Low/no calorie sweeteners do not affect blood glucose levels¹¹ and the consumption of foods containing them instead of sugar induces a lower blood glucose rise after their consumption compared to sugar-containing foods.¹²

Finally, pregnancy may make women more prone to oral health problems, which can lead to poor health outcomes for the mother and baby.¹³ Low/no calorie sweeteners can contribute to good dental health when used in place of sugar. As they are not fermentable ingredients – which means they are not broken down by bacteria in our mouth – low/no calorie sweeteners do not contribute to tooth decay.^{12,14}



1 IN 6
births (21 million) are affected by high blood glucose in pregnancy.

Source: International Diabetes Federation (IDF), Diabetes Atlas 10th edition, 2021.

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Speak to your doctor or health practitioner for further information on optimal nutrition during pregnancy and lactation. Visit our website www.sweeteners.org for further information on low/no calorie sweeteners.



Low/no calorie sweeteners such as acesulfame-K, aspartame, cyclamate, sucralose, saccharin and steviol glycosides (stevia) are food ingredients with sweet taste and no, or virtually no, calories.



Low/no calorie sweeteners are used in foods and beverages as well as in table-top sweeteners in place of sugar to provide the desired sweetness with fewer or zero calories.



They are amongst the most thoroughly researched ingredients worldwide and their safety has been evaluated and confirmed for all population groups including pregnant and lactating women by European and international authorities such as the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the Joint Food and Agriculture Organization/World Health Organization Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA).^{15,16}