

## ASK THE EXPERTS | advice

[SIG of Anita Del Bianco]

Anita Del Bianco

is a board-certified obstetrician and gynecologist with Physicians' Primary Care of Southwest Florida.

[BOX]

### ASK US ANYTHING

We'll find the answer. In this new advice column, we take your questions and pose them to the appropriate expert. Want to know how much your baby should be eating? Or how to tune-up your lawn mower? Send your question to [editor@swflparentchild.com](mailto:editor@swflparentchild.com) or post it to the Ask the Expert group on [gulfcoast.momslikeme.com](http://gulfcoast.momslikeme.com). We'll get your answer. If we publish your question, you'll get a MomsLikeMe.com T-shirt.

[HED]

Food and pregnancy

[DEK]

How to stay healthy when you're expecting

**Q:** I just found out I'm pregnant and seem to be hungry all the time and have strong cravings. How much should I be eating? Should I be exercising, too?

**A:** As a general rule, you should consume approximately 300 more calories a day than you did before you became pregnant. However, this should be discussed with your health care provider to determine what is appropriate for you. If you were overweight or underweight prior to becoming pregnant, your caloric needs may be different.

It's common for women to have food cravings during pregnancy. There's nothing wrong with indulging in these cravings, as long as you are eating a healthy diet and not limiting your food choices.

Here are some recommended daily servings for pregnancy:

- Milk, yogurt and cheese: Four servings per day. Serving sizes are 1 cup of milk, 1 ounce of cheese, 1 1/3 cup of cottage cheese, 1 1/2 cup of ice cream or 1 cup of yogurt or custard.
- Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs and nuts: Two to three servings per day or 6 to 7 ounces total. The following servings equal an ounce of meat: one egg, one slice of cheese, two tablespoons peanut butter, a half cup of beans.
- Fruits: Three to four servings per day. A serving is one medium fruit or half a cup of 100-percent fruit juice or fresh fruit.
- Vegetables: Four to five servings per day. A serving is a half cup of cooked or 1 cup of raw vegetables.

- Choose one good source of vitamin C daily. Examples include broccoli, grapefruit, orange juice, cabbage, greens, strawberries, cantaloupe, oranges and tomatoes.
- Choose one good source of vitamin A every other day. Vitamin A is found in dark green or orange vegetables or fruits, such as apricots, spinach, sweet potatoes and carrots.
- Bread, cereals, rice and pasta: Nine to 11 servings per day. A serving is a half cup or one slice.

Use margarine, salad dressings and oils sparingly.

Do not eat uncooked sushi or oysters during pregnancy. Also avoid eating fish high in mercury, such as shark, swordfish, king mackerel or tilefish. Check with the Florida Department of Health for a fish consumption advisory for locally caught fish that are safe.

Do not drink alcohol. The use of alcohol during pregnancy has been associated with a wide range of adverse effects on both the mother and the developing baby. Mental retardation is one of the most associated preventable disorders found with alcohol use during pregnancy.

Alcohol use also causes fetal alcohol syndrome and is associated with behavioral disabilities and other cognitive problems. No level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy is considered safe.

As for exercise, if you had a routine prior to becoming pregnant, you may continue as long as it's low impact. The rule of thumb when working out is that you should be able to carry on a conversation during your workout. If you are working so hard that you are out of breath and cannot carry on a conversation, then reduce your exertion level.

Yoga, Pilates and strength training are OK if you are having a routine pregnancy without complications. Make sure you stay hydrated and stop any activity that causes any cramping or spotting.

Gaining weight is normal during pregnancy. A slow and steady weight gain is best. About two to four pounds the first three months is normal. After that, you should gain about one pound per week. Your total weight gain should be about 25 to 35 pounds.

If you notice that you are gaining weight too fast, limit your intake of sweets and foods high in fat, such as soda, candy, pastry, cake, cookies, doughnuts and fried foods. The old phrase "you are what you eat" is very true during pregnancy. Foods that are high in protein (meats, nuts and cheeses) will give you long-term energy.

Foods that are high in carbohydrates can give you a burst of energy but then will be followed by a slow, tired feeling. A balanced diet is the best.

Also, you should get eight hours of sleep each night. As your pregnancy progresses, you may find it difficult to get comfortable in bed. Use position changes and pillows to help support your back, legs and growing abdomen.