

## Appropriate Weight Gain During Pregnancy<sup>1</sup>

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Many people these days are concerned about weight gain. Pregnant women often share these concerns; however, it's important for pregnant women to understand that weight gain during pregnancy is critical to their babies' health.

According to registered dietitian and author Judith Brown, most women need to gain between 25 and 35 pounds during pregnancy, while those who are underweight need to gain more: about 28 to 40 pounds. Overweight women should gain not more than 25 pounds and obese pregnant women should gain at least 15 pounds, but not much more (Brown, 2005).

Appropriate weight gain can be achieved by eating an average of about 300 extra calories per day during the second and third trimesters. The best way to know if your calorie intake is appropriate is to follow your pattern of weight gain with your doctor. If a mother does not gain enough weight during pregnancy, her baby is at risk for low birthweight and future health complications. On the other hand, gaining too much weight puts her at increased risk for obesity later in life, especially if she keeps the weight on long past her baby's birth (Brown, 2005).

Breastfeeding is one way to begin losing weight gained during pregnancy. Breastfeeding mothers need to consume adequate calories to ensure adequate milk production, so strict

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“dieting” is not appropriate. Eating a variety of healthful foods and being physically active also will help new moms get back to their pre-pregnancy weight or a healthier weight at a reasonable pace.

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## Reference

Brown, J. (2005). *Nutrition through the life cycle* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth (p. 89, 90, 92).