

Healthy Fats for Pregnancy



Following up on our previous exclusive article *Healthy Fats for Children*, we have highlighted why healthy fats are vital in children's growth and development. To further emphasize the benefits of healthy fats to human growth, we will be focusing on **the importance of healthy fats during pregnancy** in this article installment.

Pregnancy is regarded as a beautiful journey for every woman, despite the challenges they might face during the early stages of pregnancy such as **nausea, headache, back pain, lack of appetite** and many more. Although they face many adversities, one thing expecting mothers do have to be concern about is what they eat during pregnancy as it is **not only vital for the mothers but also to the development of the fetus inside the womb.**

Pregnant women are recommended to eat a **variety of nutritious food and that includes healthy fat**. This is not only to maintain good health, but it also promotes good benefits for the baby. Want to know more? Continue reading as the Food Experts of Asia reveal to you various benefits of good fats for pregnancy.

Where can we get healthy fats?

Every pregnant women should make it a point from the start of their pregnancy to add healthy fats into their diet. And by healthy fats, look out for **monounsaturated** and **polyunsaturated** fats; in which can be obtained from **sardines, anchovies, mackerel, salmon and fresh tuna**. Good fats can also be found in **nuts, avocados, plant-based oils including sunflower, corn and olive oil**. Walnuts, pumpkin seeds, flaxseeds and dark green leafy vegetables also contain high levels of omega 3 fatty acids (Howard, 2015).

What is the right amount of healthy fats??

Healthy fats like omega-3 fatty acids and DHA are very important for the development of the **baby's brain, eyes and central nervous system**. Therefore, mothers have to make sure they get **the right amount** of daily intake of omega-3 fatty acid and DHA to be supplied to the fetus inside the womb.

If you're wondering what is the right amount of good fats to be taken daily, experts have recommended pregnant women to consume at least **200mg of DHA daily** to benefit the pregnancy and fetal health. Experts also suggested a limit for **fish consumption – to 2 servings weekly** (approximately 340g) as seafood might contain mercury and other toxins which could be harmful to the growing fetus.

Although vital, recent surveys have demonstrated that many pregnant women consume little to no fish throughout pregnancy, due to assumption that eating fish while pregnant is not safe and might risk the baby's growth and health. But you've heard what the experts said, moms! **Two serving of fish weekly is safe and vital for your baby's overall health and growth**. If you're really concern about the levels of mercury in fish, there are **alternate sources of DHA such as fish oil and algae oil capsule**.

Good fats for good mood

As pregnant women enter their third trimester and when the tummy gets bigger, they may experience many kinds of discomfort, mood swings and also depression. Including healthy fats into their diet can **enhance their mental health thus improving mood and behavior.**

According to research, adequate intake of DHA and omega-3 fatty acid may reduce depressive symptoms and improve mood of the expecting mothers. Pregnant women aged 18 to 40 years with major depressive disorder onset between their 16th week (second trimester) and 32nd week (third trimester) of gestation were given capsule contained a total dosage of omega-3 fatty acids with 2.2g of EPA and 1.2g of DHA from fish source for 8 weeks. Study concluded that **omega-3 fatty acids significantly improved depressive symptoms in pregnant women with major depressive disorder** (Su et al., 2008).

Preterm birth

It is also important to know that healthy fats may **decrease the possibility of preterm birth.** Based on statistics, 10% of babies are born preterm worldwide where they were birthed before 37 weeks of pregnancy. Therefore, World Health Organization has recommended the daily intake of omega-3 fatty acids in pregnancy to **no less than 300mg per day.** Continuous intake of DHA and omega-3 during pregnancy may decrease prostaglandin production thus leading to the reduction of inflammation within the uterus which could be associated with preterm labor. In conclusion, pregnant mothers should eat healthy fats from the very beginning of pregnancy to ensure the baby grows healthy and to avoid problems such as premature delivery and low birth weight. (Kar et al., 2016)

Types of fats to be avoided during pregnancy

When you know you're pregnant, it's important to know what kind of food to avoid or minimize in order to reduce the risks of pregnancy for you and the baby. As fat comes in many forms and categories, a type of fat to note is **trans-fat.** Food rich in trans-fats such as processed foods and oils are high in cholesterol and if taken excessively, **may increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.** A few example of processed

foods that should be avoided or taken in a small amount are **cakes, cookies, crackers, animal products, margarine, fried potatoes, potato chips and popcorn.** (Estadella, et al., 2013)

Healthy fats for healthy pregnancy

Pregnancy is a beautiful journey and eating healthy is essential for the health of both mom and baby. Expecting mothers should learn as much as possible about **what food to eat and avoid** so they will have a smooth pregnancy journey from the beginning until delivery. You don't want to miss all the goodness from healthy fats, particularly omega-3 fatty acids and DHA.

You may also be interested in [Healthy Fats for Seniors](#), [Keto Diet for Weight Loss](#) or [Why Children Need Healthy Fat](#)

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