

Nutrition Matters

Nutrition Services, Community and Health Services

Moms can reach a healthy weight after pregnancy

A new baby brings many changes to parents' lives. For example, there is now an extra someone who needs to be fed, kept safe and held. Pregnancy changes your body as well. Your body will not look the way it did nine months ago.

If you are like many women, you are anxious to lose the weight you gained during pregnancy. If you gained a healthy 25-35 pounds, only a small part of that was baby (6-8 pounds). Your body stored a little of that weight as fat (5 - 8 pounds) and the rest of it as fluid. This fluid weight will take a little time to lose.

This fact sheet was designed to help you reach a healthy weight safely.



Be cautious of dieting

Healthy eating and being active are the *only* safe ways of reaching and keeping a healthy weight.

Go easy on yourself. After all, you are adjusting to a new member of the family. Your focus needs to be on things other than your weight. A healthy lifestyle will

keep you energized to keep up with your new baby.

Breastfeeding may help some women lose weight more easily. But breastfeeding moms need to make sure that they let their appetite guide their eating. **If you try to lose weight too fast while breastfeeding you may reduce your supply of milk.** Therefore, healthy eating is important for both you and your baby.

Studies show that 75% of people who start weight-loss diets stop following the diet in less than one year. Most people in fact gain back all the lost weight. Sometimes they gain even more in five years. For most people, **diets simply don't work.**

Dieting can be risky...

- It can rob you of many important nutrients and make you tired and cranky
- Diets are often so hard to follow that they cause cravings
- Diets can cut you off socially
- Diets set you up for more weight gain, making you feel like you have failed
- Diets are often used short-term rather than leading to life-long healthy eating
- Diets can cause health problems such as loss of strength, constipation, high cholesterol levels and lack of vitamins and minerals.

“Diets” teach us that there are “good” foods and “bad” foods. But there are no good or bad foods. **One food, one meal or one day’s meals are not how we define eating habits.** Healthy eating is about what is eaten on a regular basis.

Healthy eating is...

- Enjoying a wide variety of foods from the four food groups of *Canada’s Food Guide*
- Eating *Food Guide* serving sizes
- Tuning into your feelings of hunger
- Eating when you are hungry
- Stopping when you are full
- Enjoying food

Women can have better health at any body size. Healthy habits such as eating well, being active and having positive self-esteem lead to better health.

Tips for a healthier you

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Healthy bodies come in a variety of shapes and sizes! Be realistic. Be aware that genetics play a key role in the shape of your body and how much you weigh. Some of the weight gained in pregnancy will linger to help with breastfeeding or it may just settle in new places.

If you gained a healthy 25-35 pounds in pregnancy, only five to eight pounds of this was stored as fat. Within a year, if you eat well and are physically active, you will drop down to your pre-pregnancy weight, give or take 2 to 4 pounds.

Eating too few calories may speed up weight loss but can be bad for your health and your ability to care for your baby.

Focus on living actively rather than the number on the scale. Enjoy a variety of

foods in smaller portions. These habits will help with reaching a healthy body weight.

Change the way you see, not the way you look

Ask yourself, “What can I do to be healthier and happier?” instead of “How can I lose weight?” Develop a healthy way of thinking.

Listen to your body

Many people can no longer tell when they are hungry or when they are full. This is very true for “dieters.” Our bodies have a natural way of letting us know how much food to eat and when to stop. Success is listening to what your body is telling you.

Here are some tips on tuning into your body:

• **Notice hunger cues**

Is it really hunger? Often we think we feel hungry, but may actually be bored, stressed, feeling thirsty or just tired.

Tip: Ask yourself when you last ate. Maybe what you need is fresh air or a change of pace.

• **Know when to stop**

Learn your “just full” feeling; if you feel uncomfortable, you’ve eaten more than you need.

Tip: Use smaller plates or put less food on your plate. Studies show that larger portions make us eat more, even if we don’t really like the food!


• **Eat regularly during the day**

Skipping meals often leads to overeating. Eat before feeling really hungry. This is harder with a baby in the house, so find some help. Try to have foods in the fridge that can be eaten easily while feeding the baby or while the baby is sleeping.

Tip: Eat when your body tells you it is running out of fuel. This may be every three to four hours.

- **Eat slowly...enjoy your food!**

Take time to taste and enjoy each bite. Your body will send you the message that you are full, but it takes about 20 minutes.



Visit www.healthymeasures.ca for practical tips on being active, eating well and being yourself.

Follow the guides

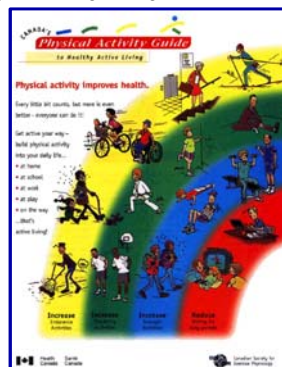
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The following guides will help you eat well and stay active: 1) *The Handbook for Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living* and 2) *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*.

For a copy of these guides call York Region Health Services *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653 or visit www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide

1. *The Handbook for Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living*

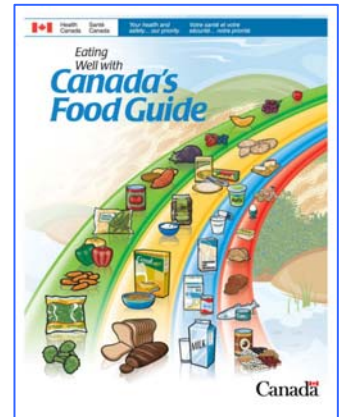
The *Physical Activity Guide* will help you to be active your way, every day! First, find something you enjoy. Then add that activity little by little to each day. Aim for at least 30-60 minutes of physical activity daily. This can be done all at once or in 10-minute sessions during the day. It all adds up. What is vital is to stick to it and make it fun.



Tip: Make activity part of the daily routine, whether it means taking the baby for a walk or walking while on the phone – every little bit counts!

2. *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*

Women can get the nutrients they need by following the Canada's Food Guide. The *Food Guide* provides details on eating well to suit women at any age, outlining Food Guide servings to help plan - and judge - food portions.



Tip: Use the following chart to get an idea of what one Food Guide serving looks like. Then double-check your actual serving sizes using a measuring cup. You may be surprised.



Use Canada's Food Guide to plan meals using these serving sizes.

Serving Sizes	
Grain Products (6 - 7 Food Guide servings a day)	Milk and Alternatives (2 Food Guide servings a day)
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (175 mL) hot cereal = 1 Food Guide serving	1 cup (250 mL) of milk or fortified soy beverage = 1 Food Guide serving
125 mL ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) rice, bulgur, couscous or pasta = 1 Food Guide serving	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (175 g) yogurt = 1 Food Guide serving
$\frac{1}{2}$ bagel, pita or tortilla = 1 Food Guide serving	50 g cheese = 1 Food Guide serving
Vegetables and Fruit (7 - 8 Food Guide servings a day)	Meat and Alternatives (2 Food Guide servings a day)
125 mL ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) fresh, frozen or canned vegetables = 1 Food Guide serving	75g meat, poultry, or fish = 1 Food Guide serving
1 fruit or 125 mL ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) = 1 Food Guide serving	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (175 mL) beans or lentils = 1 Food Guide serving
1 cup (250 mL) raw leafy vegetables = 1 Food Guide serving	2 tbsp (30 mL) peanut butter = 1 Food Guide serving
125 mL ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) cooked leafy vegetables = 1 Food Guide serving	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (60 mL) nuts (almonds or walnuts) = 1 Food Guide serving
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125 mL) 100% juice = 1 Food Guide serving	2 eggs = 1 Food Guide serving

Water

Water is a special nutrient that your body needs every day. Water makes up 60% of your weight. It is needed to keep you cool in hot weather. For a healthier you, drink plain water to quench your thirst. As you become more active you will need to drink more water.

Take it one step at a time

Small changes in what you eat and adding activity to your day can result in better health. Making small changes over a longer period of time will be easier to keep up. For example, enjoy one more fruit each day or start the day off with a quick walk around the block. Each small step creates a healthier you.

Change doesn't happen by chance. It takes thought and preparation – give yourself some time to make changes.