

## Weight Gain During Pregnancy

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You're pregnant, right? So you get to eat as many french fries as you want, right? Wrong! Be careful about how much weight you gain during your pregnancy. Gaining too much or too little can be harmful to you and your baby. How many pounds you need to add depends on how much you weigh when you become pregnant.

Gaining the right amount of weight helps protect the health of your baby. Women who gain too little are at increased risk of having a small baby (less than 5 1/2 pounds). Women who gain too much are at increased risk of having an early baby or a large baby. They may also have health problems themselves such as diabetes, high blood pressure and varicose veins.

If you began pregnancy at a normal weight, you should gain 25–35 pounds over the nine months. Adding about 300 extra calories a day to your diet will help you reach this goal. (One extra healthy snack, such as four fig bars and a glass of skim milk, will provide these calories.) Most women gain four to six pounds in the first trimester, and then average a pound a week in the second and third trimesters.

If you began pregnancy underweight, you should probably gain a little more. That's because underweight women are more likely to have small babies. A 28- to 40-pound gain is usually recommended. Try to gain slightly over a pound a week in the second and third trimesters.

If you began pregnancy overweight, you should gain only 15–25 pounds. This means you should put on one pound every two weeks in the second and third trimesters. While you don't want to gain too much weight, you should never try to lose weight during pregnancy because that could harm your baby.

Where does it all go?

### **Approximate breakdown of a weight gain of 29 pounds**

Blood	3 pounds
Breasts	2 pounds
Womb	2 pounds
Baby	7.5 pounds
Placenta	1.5 pounds
Amniotic fluid	2 pounds
Fat, protein & other nutrients	7 pounds
Retained water	4 pounds

If you're expecting twins, you should probably gain a total of 35–45 pounds. That translates into about 1 1/2 pounds a week in the last two trimesters.

To find out if you were underweight or overweight before pregnancy, learn your Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI is a measure of body fat based on height and weight.

Putting on weight slowly and steadily is best. But don't worry if you gain less than four pounds in the first trimester, and make up for it later, or vice versa. Also, many women have one or two "growth spurts" during which they gain several pounds in a short time period, then level off. Again, this is not worrisome unless it becomes a pattern. The important thing is to keep an eye on your overall gain. You can use the weight-gain tracking chart to follow your progress.

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