Eating right is key for all moms-to-be. It is even more so when you are pregnant with more than one baby.

Carrying multiples puts you at higher risk of early delivery (before the end of 37 weeks). Babies delivered early often have serious health problems as newborns. They are also at risk for lasting disabilities and death.

Good nutrition increases the chances that your babies will be born at the right time and healthy. Follow these tips:

• **Keep all of your appointments with your doctor.** You will need more doctor visits than if you carried one baby. The extra visits can help prevent, detect, and treat any problems.

• **Ask your doctor how much weight to gain.** Gaining the right amount of weight will help prevent low birth weight and early delivery. The right amount to gain is based on how many babies you carry. It is also based on your body mass index (BMI) before you were pregnant. BMI is a number that is calculated from your weight and height.

For twins, the Institute of Medicine guidelines are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your BMI before pregnancy</th>
<th>Amount to gain during twins pregnancy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18.5-24.9</td>
<td>37-54 pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29.9</td>
<td>31-50 pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 or higher</td>
<td>25-42 pounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For triplets or more, talk with your doctor about the right amount of weight to gain.

If you are not gaining the right amount of weight, ask your doctor to schedule a meeting for you with a registered dietitian.

(continued on next page)
• **Eat healthy foods.** A guide you can trust is called [MyPlate](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html). Go to www.choosemyplate.gov/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html. It will help you:
  
  – *Choose healthy foods from five food groups.* These groups are the building blocks of a healthy diet. They are: vegetables, fruits, grains, protein foods, and dairy foods. Also choose small amounts of vegetable oils.
  
  – *Limit “empty calories,” which provide little or no nutrition.* They are calories from added sugars and solid fats. What foods are high in empty calories? Examples are soft drinks, fried foods, sweets, desserts, regular cheese, whole and 2% milk, and fatty meats.

• **Eat the amounts that are right for you.** The MyPlate website provides food plans to help people know how much to eat. But the plans are NOT for women pregnant with more than one baby. Nor are the calorie or weight guidelines. The profile you provide on the website does not let you enter that you are carrying more than one baby.

  Ask your doctor to schedule a meeting for you with a registered dietitian. You can work with the dietitian to create a food plan that is right for you.

  What if you are gaining too little weight? Eat a little more from each food group. What if you are gaining too much weight? Cut back on the amount of empty calories.

  If you are not sure what foods to eat or how much, ask your doctor to schedule a meeting for you with a registered dietitian.

  **Follow your doctor’s advice about exercise.** Being fit will help you and your babies in many ways. Ask your doctor about the types and amounts of physical activity that are safe for you. With a multiples pregnancy, you may need certain restrictions.

• **Eat seafood, but be careful about the types.** Some are high in mercury. Mercury is passed to your babies and can harm their developing nervous systems.
  
  – Do not eat these high-mercury fish: swordfish, tilefish, king mackerel, and shark.
  
  – Limit canned white (albacore) tuna to no more than 6 ounces (about 1 serving) per week. It has more mercury than light tuna.
  
  – Eat 8 to 12 ounces (about 2 servings) per week of cooked fish or shellfish with little or no mercury, such as those on the next page. Eat a variety, rather than just a few types.
Eating Well When You Are Pregnant with Multiples

- Shrimp
- Scallops
- Salmon
- Cod
- Crab
- Oysters
- Pollock
- Tilapia
- Clams
- Canned light tuna (not white)
- Catfish
- Sardines

- Do you eat fish from local waters? Check with your health department for advice.
- Do NOT eat uncooked fish or shellfish, including sushi.

- **Eat smaller meals, more often.** Eat at least five times a day. Your stomach will have less room to expand as your babies grow.

- **Take a prenatal supplement.** Your doctor will prescribe one that is safe. One pill is enough, even with multiples. More than one pill can be harmful. For example, too much vitamin A can cause birth defects. Also keep in mind that supplements don’t take the place of a healthy diet.

- **Take other supplements only if your doctor says to.** Some women need extra iron, folate, calcium, magnesium, or zinc.

- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Drink at least 10 (8-ounce) glasses every day. Dehydration raises the risk of premature birth. What are the signs of being well hydrated? You should urinate often. Also your urine should be pale in color.
  - Limit caffeine to less than 200 mg. per day. That is the amount in about 12 ounces (two small cups) of coffee. Don’t forget the caffeine in teas and soft drinks.
  - Do not drink alcohol. Any amount can harm your babies. It can slow down your babies’ growth. It can also affect your babies’ brains and cause birth defects.
  - Avoid drinks with added sugar. What about artificial sweeteners? According to the Food and Drug Administration, sucralose (Splenda™) and aspartame (Equal™) are safe for pregnant women. Talk with your doctor about what is best for you.

(continued on next page)
• **Do not eat foods that may contain bacteria that cause listeriosis.** This infection can lead to miscarriage or stillbirth. To prevent it:
  
  – Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables before using them.
  
  – While pregnant, do not eat:
    
    o Unpasteurized milk or soft cheeses
    
    o Raw or undercooked meat, poultry, or shellfish
    
    o Prepared meats, such as hot dogs or deli meats, unless they are heated until steaming hot (Do not heat them in a microwave. The heating is uneven.)

When your babies are born, you will feel good knowing you did everything you could for yourself and your babies!

**About Tobacco**

Like drinking alcohol or doing drugs, smoking during pregnancy is very harmful to you and your babies. The sooner you quit, the healthier you and your babies will be. It’s best to quit smoking before getting pregnant.

But if you are pregnant now, it is a great time to kick the habit. Talk with your health coach about ways UPMC Health Plan can support you in quitting for good.

**What I Want to Do**

Write down one or more changes you will work on now. Be **specific**. For example, “On three days next week for an afternoon snack, I will eat a slice of whole wheat bread with nonfat cheese.”

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