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## Suggested citation

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November 2021



# Women Who Are Pregnant or Lactating

**DGA** | Dietary  
Guidelines  
for Americans



# Healthy U.S. Style Dietary Pattern: Women Who Are Pregnant or Lactating

CALORIE LEVEL OF PATTERN <sup>a</sup>	1,800	2,000	2,200	2,400	2,600	2,800
FOOD GROUP OR SUBGROUP <sup>b</sup>	Daily Amount of Food From Each Group (Vegetable and protein foods subgroup amounts are per week.)					
Vegetables (cup eq/day)	2 ½	2 ½	3	3	3 ½	3 ½
	Vegetable Subgroups in Weekly Amounts					
Dark-Green Vegetables (cup eq/wk)	1 ½	1 ½	2	2	2 ½	2 ½
Red & Orange Vegetables (cup eq/wk)	5 ½	5 ½	6	6	7	7
Beans, Peas, Lentils (cup eq/wk)	1 ½	1 ½	2	2	2 ½	2 ½
Starchy Vegetables (cup eq/wk)	5	5	6	6	7	7
Other Vegetables (cup eq/wk)	4	4	5	5	5 ½	5 ½
Fruits (cup eq/day)	1 ½	2	2	2	2	2 ½
Grains (ounce eq/day)	6	6	7	8	9	10
Whole Grains (ounce eq/day)	3	3	3 ½	4	4 ½	5
Refined Grains (ounce eq/day)	3	3	3 ½	4	4 ½	5
Dairy (cup eq/day)	3	3	3	3	3	3
Protein Foods (ounce eq/day)	5	5 ½	6	6 ½	6 ½	7
	Protein Foods Subgroups in Weekly Amounts					
Meats, Poultry, Eggs (ounce eq/wk)	23	26	28	31	31	33
Seafood (ounce eq/wk) <sup>c</sup>	8	8	9	10	10	10
Nuts, Seeds, Soy Products (ounce eq/wk)	4	5	5	5	5	6
Oils (grams/day)	24	27	29	31	34	36
Limit on Calories for Other Uses (kcal/day) <sup>d</sup>	140	240	250	320	350	370
Limit on Calories for Other Uses (%/day)	8%	12%	11%	13%	13%	13%

# Estimated Change in Calorie Needs: Women Who Are Pregnant or Lactating

Estimated Change in Calorie Needs During Pregnancy and Lactation for Women With a Healthy<sup>a</sup> Prepregnancy Weight

Stage of Pregnancy or Lactation	Estimated Change in Daily Calorie Needs Compared to Prepregnancy Needs
Pregnancy: 1 <sup>st</sup> trimester	+ 0 calories
Pregnancy: 2 <sup>nd</sup> trimester	+ 340 calories
Pregnancy: 3 <sup>rd</sup> trimester	+ 452 calories
Lactation: 1 <sup>st</sup> 6 months	+ 330 calories <sup>b</sup>
Lactation: 2 <sup>nd</sup> 6 months	+ 400 calories <sup>c</sup>

**NOTE:** Estimates are based on Estimated Energy Requirements (EER) set by the Institute of Medicine. Source: Institute of Medicine. *Dietary Reference Intakes for Energy, Carbohydrate, Fiber, Fat, Fatty Acids, Cholesterol, Protein, and Amino Acids*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press; 2005.

Estimates apply to women with a healthy prepregnancy weight. Women with a prepregnancy weight that is considered overweight or obese should consult their healthcare provider for guidance regarding appropriate caloric intake during pregnancy and lactation.

# Weight Management: Women Who Are Pregnant or Lactating



## Weight Gain Recommendations for Pregnancy<sup>a</sup>

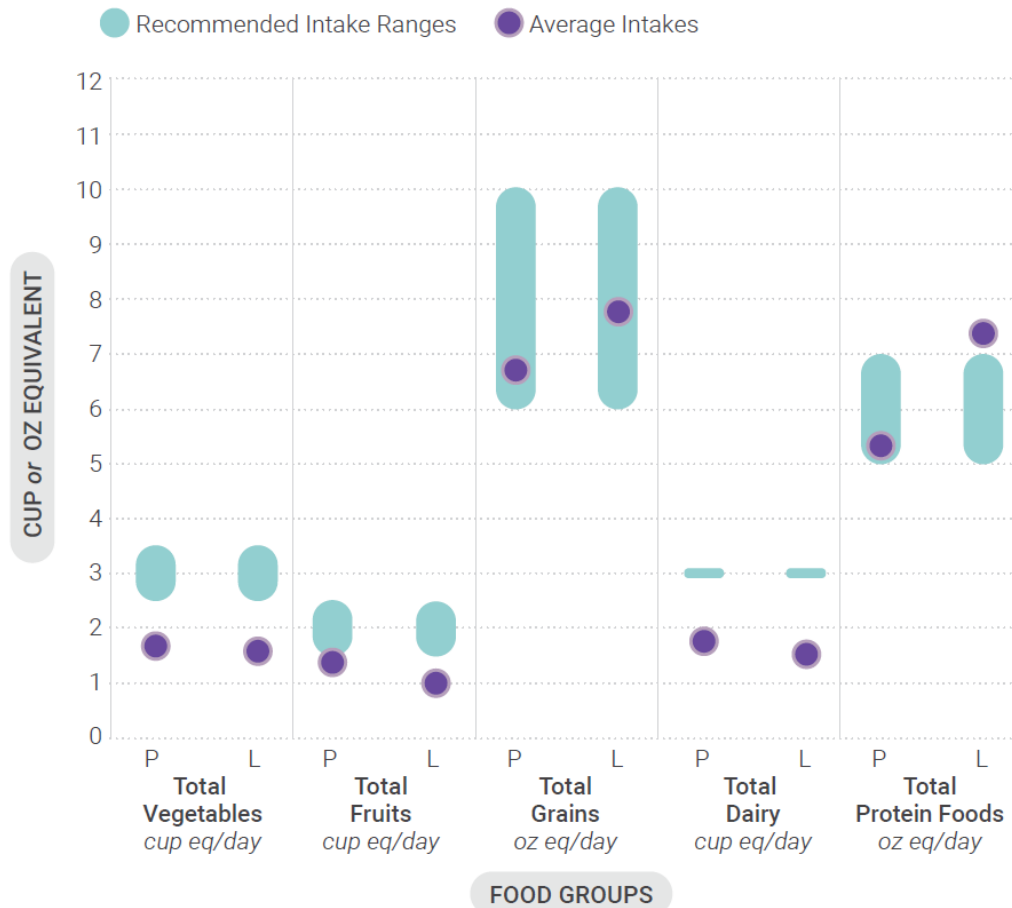
Pre-pregnancy Weight Category	Body Mass Index	Range of Total Weight Gain (lb)	Rates of Weekly Weight Gain <sup>b</sup> in the 2nd and 3rd Trimesters (mean [range], lbs)
Underweight	Less than 18.5	28-40	1 [1-1.3]
Healthy Weight	18.5-24.9	25-35	1 [0.8-1]
Overweight	25-29.9	15-25	0.6 [0.5-0.7]
Obese	30 and greater	11-20	0.5 [0.4-0.6]

<sup>a</sup> **Reference:** Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. 2009 *Weight Gain During Pregnancy: Reexamining the Guidelines*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. [doi.org/10.17226/12584](https://doi.org/10.17226/12584).

<sup>b</sup> Calculations assume a 1.1 to 4.4 lb weight gain in the first trimester.

# Current Intakes: Women Who Are Pregnant or Lactating

Average Daily Food Group Intakes Compared to Recommended Intake Ranges

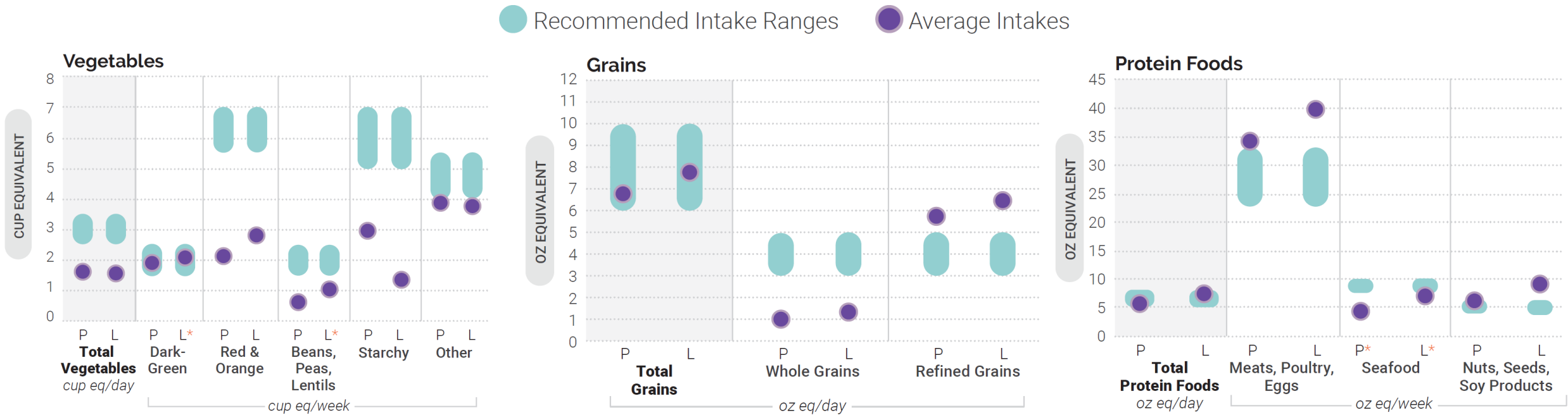


Healthy Eating Index Score  
(on a scale of 0-100)





# Average Intakes of Subgroups Compared to Recommended Intake Ranges: Women Who Are Pregnant or Lactating



\*Note: Estimates may be less precise than others due to small sample size and/or large relative standard error.

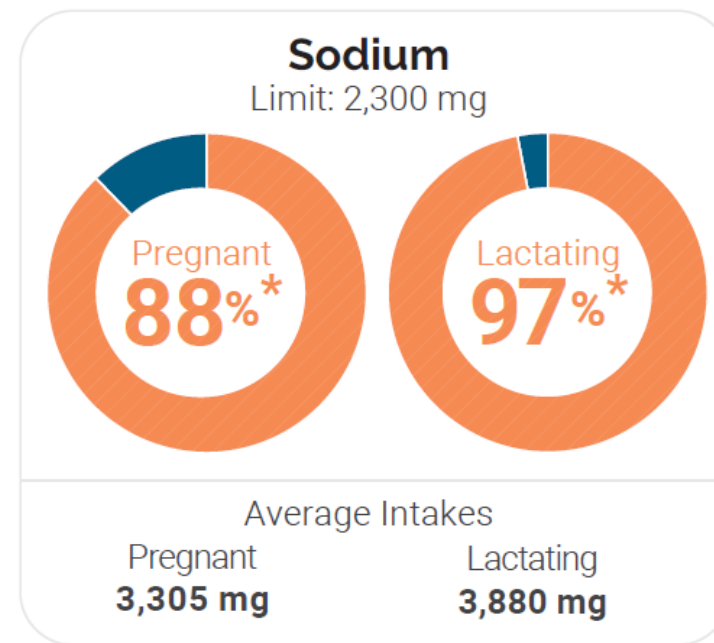
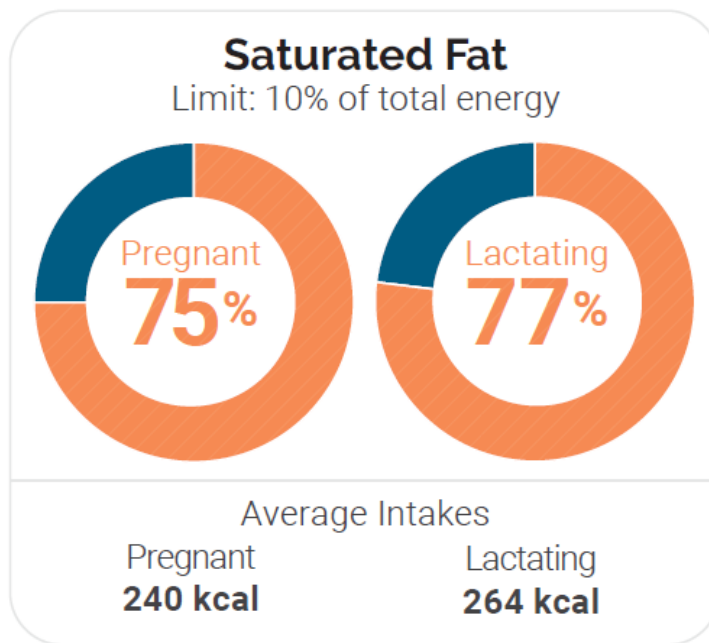
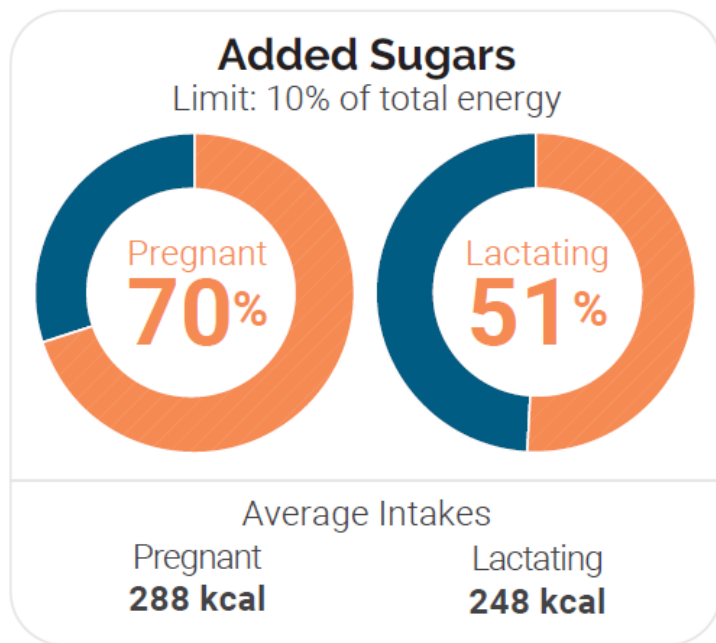
Data Source: Average Intakes Analysis of What We Eat in America, NHANES 2013-2016, women ages 20-44, day 1 dietary intake data, weighted.  
Recommended Intake Ranges Healthy U.S.-Style Dietary Patterns



# Current Intakes: Women Who Are Pregnant or Lactating Added Sugars, Saturated Fat & Sodium

Percent Exceeding Limits of Added Sugars,  
Saturated Fat, and Sodium

● Exceeding Limit ● Within Recommended Limit







# Special Considerations: Women Who Are Pregnant or Lactating

- **Pregnancy: increased nutrient needs**
  - » Meet needs primarily through nutrient dense foods and beverages, especially those providing folate, iron, iodine, and choline
  - » Daily folic acid supplementation of 400-800 mcg is recommended  
Begin 1 month prior to conception through at least the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> month of pregnancy
  - » A daily prenatal vitamin and mineral supplement may also be recommended
- **Lactation: increased nutrient needs**
  - » Meet needs primarily through nutrient dense foods and beverages, especially those providing folate, iron, iodine, and choline  
Menstruation status will impact iron needs
  - » Discuss appropriate supplementation with a healthcare provider  
Continued use of prenatal supplements may exceed folic acid and iron needs

# Special Considerations: Women Who Are Pregnant or Lactating (continued)

- Seafood
  - » Intake during pregnancy is associated with favorable measures of cognitive development in young children
  - » Consume 8-12 ounces per week from choices lower in methylmercury, following [FDA/EPA joint advice](#)
- Alcohol
  - » Women should not drink during pregnancy
  - » Not drinking is also the safest option during lactation
- Caffeine
  - » Women should discuss caffeine intake with their healthcare provider
  - » During lactation, moderate caffeine intake ( $\leq 300$  milligrams) usually does not have adverse effects



# Supporting Healthy Eating: Women Who Are Pregnant or Lactating

- Many women experience increased motivation to make healthy lifestyle changes during pregnancy and lactation, and these changes can have long-term health effects.
- However, barriers include:
  - » Time and financial resources
  - » Limited access to high-quality childcare and family leave
  - » Inadequate breastfeeding support
- Ensuring women have access to healthy, safe food is vital due to the critical role nutrition plays in health promotion during these life stages.





# Resources

## Pregnancy and Lactation

### Federal Programs and Resources

SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
WIC	Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children
FDPIR	Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
	USDA's Healthy Eating on A Budget





# Resources

## Lactation

### Community and Federal Resources

Worksite programs and policies

Childcare access

Breastfeeding peer counselors or support groups

USDA WIC Breastfeeding Support

HHS Your Guide to Breastfeeding

HHS National Breastfeeding Helpline

