



Keep watch on pregnancy pounds

My daughter-in-law is pregnant but doesn't seem to be gaining much weight. She is pleased, but I'm concerned. Should I be?

You don't say how far along in her pregnancy your daughter-in-law is, but you should know that doctors generally recommend women gain only 1 to 4 pounds total during the first three months, and then 2 to 4 pounds per month until birth.

However, guidance varies depending on the circumstances. For example, teens who are pregnant are encouraged to gain more weight, as their own bodies are still developing. And a woman's pre-pregnancy weight plays a major role: According to the Institute of Medicine, women at a normal weight for their height should gain 25 to 35 pounds during pregnancy. Underweight women should gain more, 28 to 40 pounds. Overweight women should gain less, 15 to 25 pounds, and obese women should limit weight gain to 11 to 20 pounds.

Gaining a proper amount of weight during pregnancy — not too much and not too little — is good for both mother and baby. It will decrease the chance of premature birth and Caesarean section, and increases the chance of a healthy newborn. In addition, gaining too much weight during pregnancy often causes long-term weight problems, not only for mom but for the child as well.

That's why "eating for two" is a horrible misnomer. Most women need only about 300 additional calories per day during pregnancy. For the most part, those calories should be nutrient-rich choices, from whole grains, lean protein and dairy, fruits, vegetables, and healthful fats. It's especially important for pregnant women to get enough folic acid (400 micrograms a day), iron (27 milligrams a day) and calcium (1,000 milligrams a day) for a healthy pregnancy.

There are plenty of resources to help guide your daughter-in-law to eat right for both herself and her baby. A good place to start is the National Institutes of Health "MedlinePlus" website, <http://medlineplus.gov>. Just type "Pregnancy and Nutrition" in the search engine and you'll find reliable information from a myriad of resources, including the National Academy of Dietetics, the Mayo Clinic, the Nemours Foundation and the March of Dimes.

The most important concern is to make sure your daughter-in-law is getting proper prenatal care. As long as she's seeing her doctor regularly, and they both are keeping an eye on her weight gain and other health issues, you can rest easy.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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