



HEALTHY LIFESTYLE
DURING PREGNANCY AND
BREASTFEEDING PERIODS



CYPRUS NATIONAL
ADDICTIONS AUTHORITY

Pregnancy is an important period in a woman's life. If you are pregnant or if you are thinking about or planning to have a child, you can find in this leaflet useful information on how to properly prepare yourself and how to avoid substances such as alcohol and tobacco, in order to look after yourself and the foetus.



ALCOHOL

Pregnancy Planning Period

What could happen to the foetus and the newborn baby if you consume alcohol during the period before your pregnancy?

Many women adopt healthy habits during the period that they are thinking about and/or planning a potential pregnancy, in order to contribute to the health and well-being of the child that they will bring into the world. If you adopt certain positive changes to your habits before pregnancy, it will be easier to sustain them when you are finally pregnant. Avoiding alcohol consumption before the actual pregnancy will prepare your body with the appropriate conditions for the foetus.

Did you know that...

Consuming alcohol before pregnancy might lead to a difficulty in conceiving, to the disruption of the menstrual cycle in women or to subfertility and to temporary impotence in men.

Pregnancy Period

What you should know concerning the Consumption of Alcohol during Pregnancy

- Alcohol is transferred to the foetus in the same way that all substances reach the foetus: through the placenta
- The more alcohol is consumed by the mother, the more it penetrates the placenta
- The capacity of the foetal liver to effectively metabolise substances is reduced, which means that it cannot easily reject alcohol

Alcohol consumption during pregnancy increases the chances for:

- Miscarriage and intrauterine foetal death
- Abnormal intrauterine growth of the foetus
- Preterm labour
- Low birth weight neonates
- Birth of newborn babies suffering from Foetal Alcohol Syndrome with long-term effects, such as:

- anomalies of the brain, heart, body, hearing or vision and facial features
- balance problems
- delayed speech development
- learning difficulties
- low academic performance
- difficulties in writing and drawing
- hyperactivity and attention deficit

Breastfeeding Period

What you should know concerning the Consumption of Alcohol during the Breastfeeding Period

- Alcohol passes into the system of a newborn in the same way that a newborn gets all other substances; through the breast milk
- Alcohol consumption during the period of breastfeeding may affect the newborn's growth
- Alcohol consumption during the period of breastfeeding may reduce

the production and change the way breast milk tastes, resulting in the newborn's aversion towards breast milk

- After consuming alcohol, it is preferable to avoid breastfeeding for two to three hours per unit of alcohol¹ in order to give enough time to your system to eliminate alcohol from breast milk

RECOMMENDATION

The Safest Option:

Zero Alcohol Consumption

It is best for mothers-to-be to abstain completely from the consumption of alcohol before conceiving and during pregnancy and the breastfeeding period in order to avoid all potential risks and to ensure the best possible conditions for their child. Even though more information is needed on the relation between low or moderate² alcohol consumption and the negative consequences for the foetus, the **recommendation for zero consumption**

¹10-14 g of alcohol: 1 glass (150 ml) wine, 1 glass/can (330 ml) beer, 1 small glass (50 ml) whiskey, vodka, brandy, ouzo, 1 glass shot (50 ml) and 1 glass shot (45 ml) zivania

constitutes the safest option.

Additionally, mothers-to-be who consume alcohol before pregnancy may face difficulties in reducing the consumption during pregnancy but they might also continue consuming it in the first trimester of gestation, since in many cases women do not become aware of their pregnancy right away. The first trimester is the most sensitive period for the foetus, during which the organs are developing.

If you are facing such a difficulty, you can discuss it with the health professional who is looking after you in order to find out the options available to you or you could call 1402 to receive guidance.

² *Low: 1 drink every so often in special occasions*

Moderate: 1-6 drinks per week, but no more than 1 drink per day. 5 or more drinks in one occasion constitute a high risk for the foetus

SMOKING

Pregnancy Period

Did you know that...

Smoking during Pregnancy can cause effects such as:

- It exposes the foetus to tobacco, making it the most directly affected passive smoker, with adverse effects on its health and growth
- It has the same impact both on the pregnant woman and the foetus, either in the form of active or passive smoking
- Premature ageing and placental abruption
- Placenta previa
- Preterm rupture of membranes and preterm labour
- Intrauterine growth restriction of the foetus
- Increase of foetal morbidity and mortality

You should know that Smoking increases the chances for:

- Low birth weight of neonates
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Childhood asthma
- Birth of infants with susceptibility to respiratory infections
- Appearance of attention deficit syndrome
- Behavioural disorders in childhood
- Inability to breastfeed

Breastfeeding Period

Did you know that...

Smoking during the breastfeeding period causes effects such as the reduced production of breast milk, the change in the way it tastes and the creation of an aversion of the neonate for the mother's breasts.

RECOMMENDATION

The Safest Option:

Avoid Exposure to Active or Passive Smoking

If you or the people around you are smoking, the foetus or neonate is exposed to smoke. A smoke-free environment is the best for you and your child. Given the fact that the addiction to nicotine is very strong, many people may be facing a difficulty to quit or reduce smoking. Quitting smoking is the safest and best option. In case you need support or guidance, you can call the toll-free "Quit Smoking" helpline at 1431.

USE OF OTHER ADDICTIVE SUBSTANCES

In case that you are using psychotropic substances such as drugs or medicines uncontrollably, it is important for your own health as well as for the health of the foetus or your child to consult your physician or solicit the help of one of the specialised centres available, such as the addiction treatment centres "ANOSI" at Old Limassol Hospital or "THEMEA" at

Nicosia General Hospital. Do not try to conceal the use of substances; there is no reason to be ashamed. Properly trained professionals will provide the help you need. The sooner you get help, the better for you and the baby you are carrying.

More information and support is available at the following websites and telephone numbers:

- **Cyprus National Addictions Authority**

The website of the Cyprus National Addictions Authority provides substantial information regarding alcohol and other addictive substances as well as the different services and therapeutic programmes available in every district. It also offers the opportunity to contact a specialist, voice your concerns and receive the help you need.

www.naac.org.cy

Tel.: 22 442960

Hotline: 1402

NICOSIA DISTRICT

Therapeutic Unit for Addicted Persons (THEMEA)
24-hour Help Line for Alcohol Addiction: **+357 22402276**
Tel. +357 22457060

Smoking Cessation Clinic **Tel. +357 22605317, +357 22605323**

Toll-free Helpline to Quit Smoking: **1431**

Multipurpose Intervention Centre **Tel. +357 22465616**

«ITHAKI» Centre for Prevention and Counselling of KENTHEA
(Drug Addiction Treatment Organisation) **Tel. +357 22524826**

«APOFASIZO» Counselling Centre **Tel. 70005537**

LARNACA DISTRICT

Veresies Clinic **Tel. 70000659, 24645333**

Self-Help Groups Programme - «MESOGIOS PREVENTION CENTRES»
Tel. +357 24645333

«Kimonas» Counselling Centre -
«MESOGEIOS PREVENTION CENTRES» **Tel. +357 24645333**

LIMASSOL DISTRICT

«ODYSSEAS» Prevention and Counselling Centre **Tel. +357 99403606**

Centre of Intensive Psychological Therapy for Rehab of Adults in Moderate Use "ANAKAMPSI" **Tel. +357 25305011**

"Psychotherapy Centre for Long-Term Rehab" (PSEMA), Cyprus Institute of Psychotherapy **Tel. +357 99082856**

FAMAGUSTA DISTRICT

«ACHILLEAS» Prevention and Counselling Centre **Tel. +357 97614447**

PAPHOS DISTRICT

«TOLMI» Outpatient Therapeutic Community for Addicted Persons
Tel. +357 26941919

NUTRITION & WEIGHT

Pregnancy Period

Did you know that...

A healthy diet during pregnancy is more important than during any other period. The diet of the pregnant woman should provide the necessary nutrients so that the baby can properly grow and also for her own well-being.

You should know that ...

Every woman has a different body type as well as different needs but, generally speaking, it stands to reason that there will be weight gain. The recommended number of kilograms to gain depends on your weight before the pregnancy and, more specifically, it is calculated according to the Body Mass Index (weight in kg divided by height in metres squared).

In the table below you can see the recommended weight gain according to the weight before the pregnancy:

BMI	Recommended Weight Gain
< 18,5	12,5 -18 kg.
18,5-20	11,5-16
≥ 25	6,8 -11,5 kg.
≥ 30	5-9 kg.

What should a pregnant woman eat?

You should consume a variety of foods in small and regular meals so that the foetus will get all necessary nutrients in order to properly grow. Nutritional guidelines for pregnant women follow the traditional Mediterranean Diet model.

Try to eat:

2-3 times: pulses

1-2 times: fish*

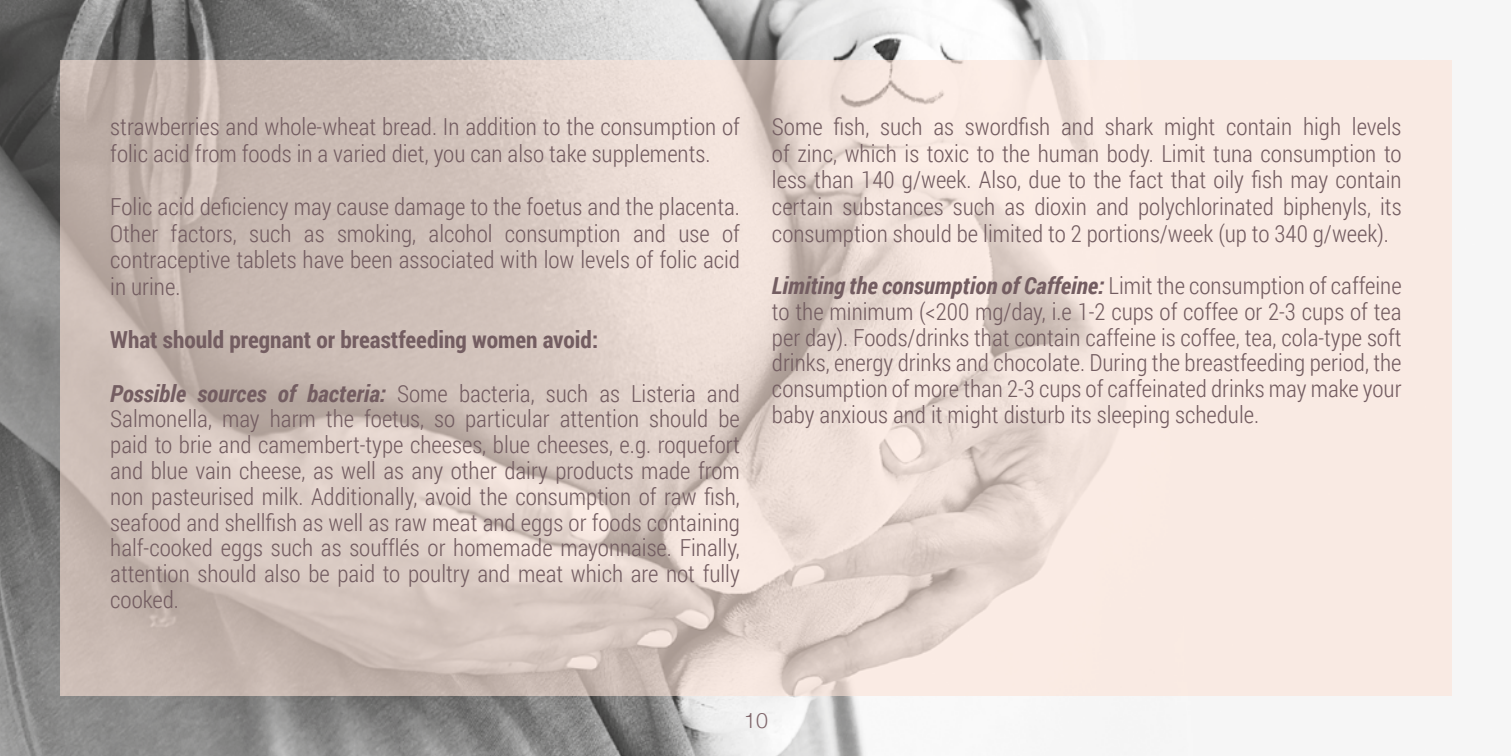
1-2 times: chicken/turkey/rabbit

1 time: red meat

** **Tip:** eat at least 120 g up to 340 g fish per week, where at least 1 portion consists of oily fish such as sea bream, sea bass, salmon etc. which are good sources of omega-3 fatty acids.*

Folic Acid

Folic acid is a vitamin of the B-Vitamins group. Its intake is essential during pregnancy since it plays a key role in the formation of DNA as well as in proper cell division. Folic acid needs are 400 mg per day and, during pregnancy, they are increased by 200 mg, which means that if you are pregnant you have to get 600 mg per day. Good dietary sources of folic acid are pulses, green leafy vegetables, liver, citrus fruits and their juices,

A pregnant woman is shown from the waist up, wearing a grey top. She is holding a white bunny plush toy with black eyes and a pink nose. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

strawberries and whole-wheat bread. In addition to the consumption of folic acid from foods in a varied diet, you can also take supplements.

Folic acid deficiency may cause damage to the foetus and the placenta. Other factors, such as smoking, alcohol consumption and use of contraceptive tablets have been associated with low levels of folic acid in urine.

What should pregnant or breastfeeding women avoid:

Possible sources of bacteria: Some bacteria, such as Listeria and Salmonella, may harm the foetus, so particular attention should be paid to brie and camembert-type cheeses, blue cheeses, e.g. roquefort and blue vein cheese, as well as any other dairy products made from non pasteurised milk. Additionally, avoid the consumption of raw fish, seafood and shellfish as well as raw meat and eggs or foods containing half-cooked eggs such as soufflés or homemade mayonnaise. Finally, attention should also be paid to poultry and meat which are not fully cooked.

Some fish, such as swordfish and shark might contain high levels of zinc, which is toxic to the human body. Limit tuna consumption to less than 140 g/week. Also, due to the fact that oily fish may contain certain substances such as dioxin and polychlorinated biphenyls, its consumption should be limited to 2 portions/week (up to 340 g/week).

Limiting the consumption of Caffeine: Limit the consumption of caffeine to the minimum (<200 mg/day, i.e 1-2 cups of coffee or 2-3 cups of tea per day). Foods/drinks that contain caffeine is coffee, tea, cola-type soft drinks, energy drinks and chocolate. During the breastfeeding period, the consumption of more than 2-3 cups of caffeinated drinks may make your baby anxious and it might disturb its sleeping schedule.

PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Did you know that...

Physical activity and exercise are key components for a healthy lifestyle and more so during pregnancy, since during this period increased secretion of relaxin and progesterone hormones is observed, and they also speed up postpartum recovery. However, hormonal changes increase joint looseness and this might lead to an increased risk for injuries and pain.

Starting or continuing to exercise moderately during the pregnancy is not associated with any negative results. Exercise improves the pregnant woman's physical condition and it increases her muscular strength and stamina. It strengthens the abdomen and back muscles in order for the body to be able to maintain the correct posture and it prevents lumbar spine pains. It also strengthens perineal muscles, which help to push the baby out. Exercise may reduce stress in pregnant women and it is possible that it has a protective role against depression symptoms

during pregnancy. It is also associated with better cardiorespiratory capacity for pregnant women, prevention of urinary incontinence and lower back pains for the duration of the pregnancy, it limits body weight gain (but not the weight gain of the foetus), it enables proper intestinal function, it contributes to the improvement of sleep quality, it decreases the risk of developing gestational diabetes and, in case it does develop, it decreases the number of pregnant women who need insulin.

You should know that...

Cycling, swimming, yoga and pilates (adapted for pregnant women), low intensity cardio and low intensity activities in general, such as hiking, are the most common types of exercise during pregnancy.

Cardio exercises are generally considered acceptable in national guidelines and they are recommended during pregnancy.

The intensity of exercise should be moderate and it should have a duration of at least 20-30 minutes per day for most of the days of the week.

During your pregnancy, you should avoid:

- **Sedentary lifestyle**
- **Exercise in supine position (it could cause dizziness)**
- **Exercise when standing still in upright position (it could cause low blood pressure)**
- **Exercise in very hot and humid weather**
- **Lifting heavy objects**

You should also avoid high risk sports, such as contact sports or high impact sports (boxing, judo, wrestling) or high intensity exercise sports (football, tennis), which increase the risk of abdomen injury, fall or excessive pressure on the joints, and scuba diving, which could lead to genetic defects or decompression sickness for the foetus.

During pregnancy, you should stop exercising in case you feel:

- **dizziness or headache**
- **shortness of breath before or during exercising**
- **vaginal hemorrhage or vaginal discharge**

- **abdominal pain or low back pain**
- **contractions**

When is exercising contraindicated?

Contraindications for exercising while pregnant are mentioned in cases where the risks of exercising may outweigh the benefits. Consequently, exercise is contraindicated in cases where the pregnant woman has a medical condition or where a medical condition has appeared during the pregnancy, or circumstances that concern the foetus as well as those that are related to her previous medical history, e.g. gestational diabetes, hypertension, heart condition, placenta previa, twin pregnancy, premature contractions or premature rupture of membranes, history of preterm labour.

So, if you are pregnant, ask your physician if it is OK for you to exercise and arrange an appointment with a certified fitness instructor of prenatal and postnatal exercise for proper guidance before starting or continuing to do a certain exercise programme.

EMOTIONAL CHANGES

Did you know that...

It is perfectly normal for pregnant women to experience both positive and negative emotions concerning their pregnancy as well as concerning the changes that will follow after the arrival of the baby.

You should know that ...

- The most common symptoms that a pregnant woman experiences is anxiety which may also involve irritability (anger outbursts) and/or melancholic mood from time to time (and even depression).
- If stress is maintained at low levels, then this could be productive for the adequate planning of the pregnant woman.
- In order to manage stress and/or melancholy, it is important, first of all, to make the most of your supportive environment (where possible), so that everyone can productively contribute during the pregnancy period, when you will possibly need help with activities that you could easily carry out on your own in the past. Help will also be useful after the arrival of the baby.
- In the cases where there were pre-existing difficulties in relationships (e.g. marital problems) or financial difficulties, these may be exacerbated. If you are having such difficulties, it is important to get psychological and/or socio-economic support. In case that you have had a prior negative experience, such as the loss of a child, it is normal to experience strong anxiety during pregnancy.
- Make sure that you are looking after yourself and that you are in frequent contact with your physician and/or you are getting psychological support.

SEX

Pregnancy Period

Did you know that...

Many women may benefit from active sexual intercourse during their pregnancy due to increased levels of female hormones.

However, in case that you are experiencing any discomfort or complications or in case that your pregnancy is perceived as high risk, it is best to seek advice from your physician or your midwife.

You should know that...

- During the first and last months of your pregnancy you might not have any desire for sex due to malaise and/or general exhaustion.
- It might be more important to you to be hugged and feel close to your partner.

- Your partner's desire for sex during your pregnancy might change.
- It is important to communicate effectively and to be honest with your partner concerning the changes that you are both experiencing.
- Towards the end of your pregnancy, sexual intercourse is less frequent and the physical changes to your body might make it more difficult. If you both want to, you can try different positions.
- Sexual intercourse cannot harm the foetus, assuming that you have a normal pregnancy, since the foetus is protected by the amniotic sac, the amniotic fluid and the muscles of the uterus.
- It is not uncommon to have spotting (light bleeding) right after a sexual intercourse. In this case, or in the case of heavy bleeding, you must call the physician or midwife who is looking after you.

Pregnancy Period

Did you know that ...

Your body needs less sleep during the final stages of your pregnancy, in order to prepare you for the nights that you will have to stay awake to feed the baby.

You must know that during your pregnancy:

- It is normal to have difficulties sleeping
- Changes in your body, both hormonal and physical, as well as the worry about the arrival of your baby might affect your sleeping schedule

Tips!

- Find a comfortable sleeping position and use support pillows between your knees and for your back
- Choose to sleep on your side, and more preferably on your left side
- Avoid the consumption of caffeinated drinks in the afternoon and excessive fluids intake before sleeping
- Rest during the day for short periods of time if you feel like you need it
- Physical exercise helps you sleep better but avoid intense exercise before bedtime
- Avoid using a mobile device or any other type of screen before bedtime
- Find out about the relaxation techniques that you can use when you have difficulty sleeping

THE CYPRUS NATIONAL ADDICTIONS AUTHORITY

in cooperation with The National Committee on Foetal Alcohol Syndrome and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

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MINISTRY OF HEALTH



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