

Foods to Include and Avoid When You Are Trying to Get Pregnant

What should I eat to improve my chances of getting pregnant? Here's what to eat - and what foods to avoid - to increase your chances of conception.

One thing you can definitely expect when you are trying to get pregnant is that the 'shoulds' and 'should nots' are absolutely in full supply. It seems like everyone has the solution or simple, quick fix, and if you would just do x, y, or z, you will become pregnant with ease. As exasperating as those interactions may be, luckily, we are all *not* the same. Each of us has a unique health profile that may include nutritional deficiencies or underlying conditions. There is no one-size-fits-all meal plan for fertility, a lot of conflicting advice and honestly, a lack of research on the topic. However, there are definitely some solid recommendations coming in strong about what lifestyle changes you can implement to improve the quality of your nutrition, which can boost your chances of conception. Avoiding foods that tend to promote disease and inflammation, and eating more of what fuels your body in a balanced way will lead to optimal fertility potential.

Here are some foods you can focus on, as well as some options you may want to leave behind not just to improve fertility, but for your overall health and well-being!

Foods to Include:

[Many researchers believe](#) that the majority of infertility cases can be improved with diet and lifestyle modifications. Women who follow the principles of [The Mediterranean Diet](#) have shown improved chances of becoming pregnant. This nutritional lifestyle focuses on eating an abundance of fruits and vegetables, quality fat sources such as seafood and olive oil, and lean proteins including nuts and legumes.

- **Fruits-** [A study of almost 6,000 women](#) found that a higher fruit intake reduced the chance of infertility and Time to Pregnancy. The type of fruit you eat matters, and you should aim for fruits that are low on the glycemic index (GI) scale to help keep blood sugar levels balanced. Oranges, apples, berries, grapefruit, and mango, are all fruits that are low on the GI scale. Figs and Black Raspberries are also known for high levels of antioxidants, vitamin c, phytonutrients, and minerals.
- **Vibrant Vegetables-** High in Folic Acid, green leafy vegetables also have other minerals important to fertility, such as iron, and magnesium. [Evidence shows](#) higher folate levels

lead to better reproductive outcomes. Most vegetables are also low on the Glycemic Index and provide fiber, which helps you feel satisfied and improves digestion.

- **Healthy Fats** - Eating healthy fats helps to regulate hormones such as progesterone and testosterone. MUFA (Monounsaturated Fatty Acids) are healthy sources of these fats. Good sources of MUFA include olive oil, walnuts, and seeds. Because [avocados](#) contain folate, potassium, carotenoids, and other critical compounds for general health such as fiber, MUFA, and antioxidants, they are recommended for reproductive health. [PUFA \(Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids\)](#) plays an important role in androgen synthesis, which may support healthy ovulation. Fish and flaxseed are good sources of PUFA oils.
- **High-Quality Protein**- While some studies promote mostly plant-based protein options for fertility, such as beans, lentils, and other legumes, also including a variety of [satiating animal protein](#), which is lean and low in saturated fat seems to be the best. Salmon is at the top of the list for its concentration of healthy fats as well. Beans and legumes offer folate, fiber and protein, and a healthy gut microbiome. Eggs are a great source of protein during pregnancy as well because they contain choline, which promotes neurological development, folate, and other vitamins and minerals. Oysters are loaded with [Zinc](#), which helps the ovaries develop and release healthy eggs.
- **Complex Carbs** - Choose carbohydrate sources with a low glycemic index, like Quinoa, which is high in protein and fiber. Sweet potatoes contain antioxidants called [flavonoids](#), which reduce inflammation, and are a low glycemic starchy vegetable, along with orange squash.

Foods to Avoid:

Following an [anti-inflammatory](#) nutrition plan, similar to the Mediterranean Diet, which also includes reducing processed meats and simple sugars, has been shown to increase the chances of conception. Hypoglycemia, Type 2 Diabetes, and Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome are conditions that make it more difficult to become pregnant. Reducing your intake of unhealthy fats and simple sugars, ingredients often used in convenience foods, can help increase your chances of getting pregnant.

- **Trans Fats**- [A fertility study](#) found trans fats have a negative impact on fertility outcomes. [This study](#) directly implicated higher fast food consumption with impaired fertility. Processed meats and other packaged convenience foods contain trans fats. If you find yourself in a situation where you have to eat on the go, packing your meals is the best option, but you can usually find a salad with lean protein, beans, and/or nuts or some fresh produce with hummus or cheese to satiate your hunger.
- **Simple Sugars** - Foods with a high glycemic index cause spikes in blood sugar that contribute to conditions like Type 2 Diabetes and PCOS. Avoid sweetened, carbonated

beverages, skip the soda or sweet tea, and when you drive through for a caffeine fix, focus on unsweetened drinks without added foams or creams. Corn syrup and sweeteners made from sugar beets often contain genetically modified or bioengineered ingredients, and the [impact on fertility](#) or hormonal health has not been studied extensively. Naturally sweetened drinks and fruit-essenced carbonated waters are great alternatives.

Foods to Eat Selectively:

- **Dairy-** Many studies come back with [little to no correlation](#) in regards to the effect of consuming dairy products on fertility. One study found a [correlation between consuming low-fat dairy and infertility](#), and others suggest that high-fat dairy may promote fertility. Fermented dairy products like yogurt have added health benefits and should be included in a balanced diet for someone free from sensitivities. Dairy products contain essential vitamins and minerals and can be a flavorful way to enhance a dish.

Nourish Yourself

When you are trying to conceive, you might be tempted to alleviate some of the associated stressors with food. Dietary choices that are more similar to the Mediterranean Diet have been shown to improve conception outcomes for women. Given the widespread Standard American Diet, confusing mixed messages, and diet fads, it's vital to consult with a holistic fertility specialist who is committed to staying informed on the most current and diverse bodies of research on fertility and nutrition. There is support available to help you integrate these healthier options into your meal and snack routines while also enjoying your food!

You must be gentle with yourself and remember that food is nourishment that can and does heal. Research may not offer a one-size-fits-all, "get pregnant quick" diet prescription, but consuming a balanced diet including healthy fats, complex carbohydrates, lean proteins, fruits, and vegetables will contribute to balanced hormones and keep inflammation at bay. Your fertility doctor can guide you to healthier lifestyle choices that promote ideal pregnancy conditions in the kitchen, while enjoying a meal at a restaurant, or even going through the drive-through. Many of us have used tasty food as a reward, so it can also be helpful to explore non-food ways to treat yourself, too. A diet to promote fertility is not about counting calories or restricting, it's about being kind to yourself and consuming a variety of whole foods for nourishment that promote health in all aspects.

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