

Preconception



NUTRITION PROGRAM

7 simple food swaps to consider before you get pregnant

Eating well now can have a positive impact on your pregnancy, as well as a lasting effect on your child's health.

**5 mins
to read**

If you've made the exciting, life-changing decision to start a family, eating healthily and getting your body ready for pregnancy are the first steps of your journey. "Even before you've conceived, your diet and lifestyle can have an impact on your future child's health and wellbeing," explains Roberta Portes, nutritionist at Nestlé Nutrition.

"A healthy preconception diet includes the necessary calories and nutrients to prepare your body for pregnancy and for your future child's health," continues Portes. "Eating a diet that contains adequate amounts of fruit, vegetables, grains, and protein – along with leading an active lifestyle that excludes alcohol and smoking – is consistent with health recommendations for women who are trying to conceive."

Your simple swaps challenge

It need not be difficult – a few simple changes can make a big difference to the healthiness of your diet. Look through the list below and, if you see some changes you could make, challenge yourself to make some of these seven smart swaps within the next seven days. By making one simple change a day, you could find that in just one week your diet is higher in fibre, B vitamins, and zinc, yet lower in salt, sugar, saturated fat, and caffeine. Good news for you – and your child-to-be!

1. SWAP white bread FOR wholegrain bread

Wholegrain bread contains more fibre than most white varieties. This is because whole grains are used to make wholemeal bread but in white bread they are refined and some fibre is lost in the process. Fibre aids your digestion and helps to prevent constipation. Food rich in fibre (including whole grains, fruit, and vegetables) can also make us feel fuller than foods that are lower in fibre.

2. SWAP takeaway burgers FOR chicken fillets

Processed foods such as burgers, sausages, and chicken nuggets tend to be high in salt and saturated fats. Instead, stop at the supermarket for quality cuts of lean meat, fish, and poultry, such as easy-to-cook chicken breast fillets. That way you'll know exactly what's gone into the food on your plate.

3. SWAP sugary sodas FOR sparkling water

It may seem like a harmless way to hydrate, but a 330ml can of your favourite soft drink can contain as much as seven teaspoons of sugar. Juices may seem like healthy alternatives, but they can be calorie-laden, too – not good news if you're watching your weight. If you need a bit of fizz in your life, go for sparkling water flavoured with a squeeze of fresh lemon or lime.

4. SWAP high-sugar cereals FOR fortified and wholegrain cereals

Even cereals marketed as healthy can contain high levels of sugar and salt per serving. Instead, choose wholegrain cereals and oatmeal, which contain B vitamins and fibre to aid your digestion and may help

keep you feeling full. Also look for cereal fortified or enriched with folic acid, iron, and zinc. Folic acid is a B vitamin known to reduce the risks of certain birth defects. Iron and zinc are also important minerals. Iron helps carry oxygen around your body and zinc supports your immune system. Add a hint of natural sweetness by topping with fresh fruit, such as berries or banana, or add some crunch with toasted nuts and seeds.

5. SWAP coffee FOR caffeine-free beverages

Limiting the amount of caffeine you drink is a wise choice during pregnancy, so try to cut down now. Scientific studies have shown that high levels of caffeine can be a potential contributing factor in miscarriage. Instead, stock your cupboards with a range of tempting caffeine-free options. And, if you're not yet in the habit of drinking water with meals and throughout the day, now is a good time to start.

6. SWAP cookies FOR fresh fruit

There's nothing wrong with the occasional sweet treat, but indulging in lots of cookies, cake, and dessert foods on a daily basis isn't a good idea. These types of foods tend to be high in saturated fat and calories. If you usually enjoy a couple of cookies with your morning coffee, try swapping one of them for a piece of fresh fruit such as a banana. You'll get the added benefit of vitamin B6 – a key nutrient before and during pregnancy that helps your body make new cells.

7. SWAP fish fingers FOR fish fillets

Eating fish is great for you and your future child. Fish provides zinc, which helps your immune system, and vitamin B12, which is needed for the production of red blood cells. Fish also contains DHA, an omega-3 fatty acid that can help your future child's brain and eyes develop healthily. But picking up fish products from the frozen aisles where they're often battered or breadcrumbed isn't as good as choosing healthier lean-protein versions such as salmon fillets or white fish.

Sources

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