
Weight Gain in Pregnancy

Adapted from Pomegranate Midwives

What is normal weight gain in pregnancy?

There is a huge range of normal when it comes to gaining weight in pregnancy. Some pregnant people will only gain 20 pounds and some may gain 70, all while maintaining a healthy diet and active lifestyle. Average weight gain is 25-35 pounds.

Many factors influence weight gain: maternal metabolic rate, diet, lifestyle, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea, smoking, degree of swelling, amount of amniotic fluid, and the size of the baby. Maternal age, pre-pregnancy size, parity and ethnicity also influence maternal weight gain.

Pregnancy weight gain patterns, as well as newborn size, often run in families. If you know that your family members were on the high or low end of normal weight gain, this may be true for you as well.

What can weight measurements indicate?

The weighing of pregnant people has become routine in many areas. One of the reasons for this is that as a society we are preoccupied with size and weight, especially amongst women. Yet, research fails to show that this an effective way of monitoring the health of the pregnant person and the baby.

Weight measurement is only one of many tools that caregivers have. It cannot diagnose a healthy diet. Quality nutrition is one of the most important routes to a healthy pregnancy and birth. More effective tools include regular abdominal palpation of the growing uterus and baby, measurement of the uterine height, and urine dipsticks to diagnose sugar in the urine.

Weight measurement can be useful, once there is suspicion of a developing problem, for further monitoring of such pregnancy issues as intrauterine growth retardation (IUGR), gestational diabetes or hypertension. Of course, these problems are rare, and weight gain by itself indicates very little.

What are the disadvantages of weighing?

- Overall weight gain may play into negative feelings about body image
- Since most pregnant people do not gain at a steady rate, this can lead to worry about “too much” or “too little” within a certain time period, only to even out later
- Reaching a specific number such as 150 or 200 pounds, or the same weight as your partner, may trigger negative body image issues
- Prenatal visit time could be better spent on other care

Should I weigh myself regularly?

Regular weighing can be weekly, monthly or every trimester. You should consider regular weight measurements ...

- If you feel it would add to your pregnancy experience – many pregnant people are curious and encouraged to see the change in their bodies
- If you smoke
- If you have frequent vomiting or diarrhea
- If your care provider thinks you have signs of developing gestational diabetes, hypertension or IUGR
- If you have a pre-pregnancy BMI that is lower or higher than “normal”
- If you have had a previous baby with intrauterine growth retardation
- If you have had a previous baby whose birthweight was <2500kg (5½ pounds)