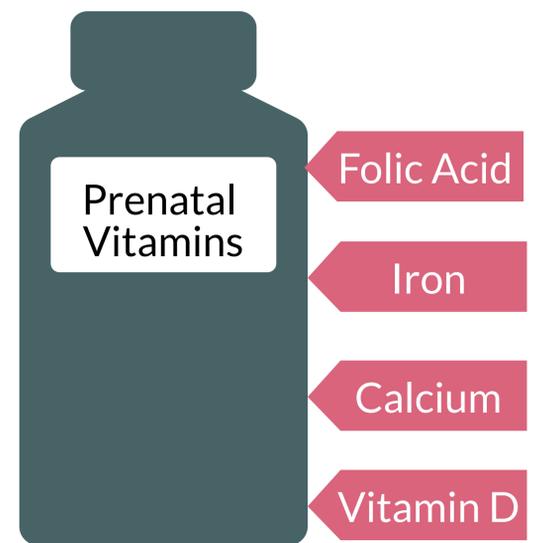


All you need to know about

Prenatal Vitamins

Nutrients are needed for your baby's development and to build strong bones and healthy blood.

It can be difficult during pregnancy to get all of the nutrients you need from food alone. Prenatal vitamins may be helpful to ensure that you have all the nutrients you and your baby need during pregnancy.



Where can I get prenatal vitamins?

- Prenatal vitamins can be found at the pharmacy or drugstore. No-name brands work just as well as name brands and are often less expensive.
- Speak with a health care provider for more information on how to access prenatal vitamins.

How should I take them?

- Take only 1 prenatal vitamin a day with water. Do not take more than one, even if you miss a day!

Folic Acid

- Folic acid is an important nutrient for developing babies, as it helps lower the risk of neural tube defects. Neural tube defects are damage to baby's brain, spine, or spinal cord.
- It is recommended to take folic acid as soon as you are considering becoming pregnant and throughout pregnancy. Taking a prenatal vitamin with 0.4 mg (400 mcg) of folic acid is a good way to make sure you are getting enough.
- In addition, eating green vegetables (broccoli, spinach), beans, and lentils will help you get the natural form of folate. Many breads and breakfast cereals also have added folic acid.

Iron

- Iron is also an important nutrient because it helps with the increase in blood that your body is creating during pregnancy. It is also good for your developing baby.
- Choose a prenatal vitamin with 16-20 mg of iron to help meet your iron needs. Also, try to have iron-rich foods often, like meat, fish, beans and lentils.

Calcium and Vitamin D

- Calcium helps keep you and your baby's bones and teeth healthy. Vitamin D helps your body absorb and use calcium.
- Aim to have 2 servings of milk and alternatives per day (or up to 4 servings for teenagers). This includes lower fat milk, cheese, yogurt, or fortified soy beverages. Milk and fortified soy beverages are also good sources of vitamin D!



Questions and Answers



Q: What should I do if my prenatal vitamin is making me sick?

A: Taking prenatal vitamins on an empty stomach can make sickness worse. Try taking it before bed or with a meal. If nausea and vomiting continue, talk to your health care provider about taking a multivitamin without iron during your first trimester until symptoms get better.

Q: Prenatal vitamins are so big and I have trouble swallowing them. What can I do?

A: Prenatal vitamins can be difficult to swallow, especially if you have nausea. Try cutting the pill in half. The pill can also be crushed using a pill-crusher and mixed with applesauce.

Q: Do prenatal vitamins cause constipation?

A: Sometimes - prenatal vitamins are high in iron, which can cause constipation. To help with constipation, slowly start to increase the amount of fibre you eat by having more vegetables and fruit, whole grains, beans and lentils. Drink plenty of fluids like water or milk and find a physical activity you enjoy, like walking or swimming. If you are still struggling with constipation talk to your health care provider.

Q: Do I need to take a prenatal vitamin with omega 3 fats?

A: No - during pregnancy, women can get enough omega 3 fats by eating 2 servings of fatty fish (like salmon or mackerel) per week. Omega 3 fats are also found in fortified eggs, walnuts, ground flax seed and canola oil. Talk to your health care provider if you are thinking of taking an omega 3 supplement.

Q: Do I need to continue taking a prenatal vitamin while breastfeeding?

A: No - you can take a multivitamin that contains folic acid to help you and your baby get the nutrients you need.

Top Tip! Eat fruits and vegetables - the vitamin C will help your body absorb the iron in the prenatal vitamins.