

Healthy Baby Club Food Supplements

Nutrition when pregnant and nursing

Energy and nutrient needs are higher when a person is pregnant or nursing. Eating a variety of foods when pregnant and nursing helps:

- The parent get the nutrients they need for a healthy pregnancy;
- The parent produce milk; and
- The baby get the nutrients they need to grow and develop.

There are some nutrients that are of special concern in pregnancy. Examples include folate (folic acid) and iron. Some of these nutrients can be hard to get from food alone. To help your Healthy Baby Club (HBC) participants get the energy and nutrients they need, encourage them to:

- Eat a variety of foods from [Canada's Food Guide](#) each day; and
- Take a multivitamin every day. The multivitamin should have:
 - 0.4 mg of folic acid (a doctor may recommend more folic acid for [some people](#))
 - 16-20 mg of iron

Check out [Canada's Food Guide](#) for more information about eating well when pregnant or nursing. If a participant asks about eating well when pregnant, you can give them the link to the [Healthy Eating During Pregnancy](#) resource.

Healthy Baby Club food supplements

Food supplements are an important part of HBC. They provide key nutrients such as calcium, vitamin D, protein, iron, vitamin C, and folate. Providing food supplements help HBC participants meet their nutrient needs.

Participants who are pregnant

The HBC Provincial Advisory Committee (PAC) recommends that food supplements be given to all pregnant HBC participants.

Participants who are nursing

A person who is nursing needs the same amounts of nutrients as when they were pregnant. If resources allow, your HBC could consider giving food supplements to participants who are nursing and gave birth within the last six months. Your program will know best how it can support participants who are nursing. If your HBC gives food supplements to participants who are nursing, it is important that those who are formula feeding do not feel stigmatized.

Participants may still struggle with not having enough food, even when they are given food supplements. You can suggest other funding programs and community supports to help them, such as the [Prenatal-Early Childhood Nutrition Supplement](#) or [211](#).

Providing food supplements

Some HBCs give food supplements directly to participants. Others may provide gift cards or grocery store vouchers. HBCs decide the best way to give supplements to participants, while trying to:

- protect participants' privacy; and,
- reduce stigma associated with receiving supplements.

Recommended food supplements

The HBC PAC recommends that HBCs provide food supplements from each of the following categories:

- Calcium and vitamin D rich protein foods
- Iron rich protein foods
- Vegetables and fruits
- Whole grain foods

Details about foods in each category are in the “Recommended Food Supplements and Substitutions” table provided. The table lists the recommended supplement and a list of possible substitutions for each category.

HBCs may want to provide a substitution if availability, quality or cost is an issue for the recommended supplements. Providing substitutions also allows for more variety and to help reduce waste. For example, if a participant has not used all 12 eggs, they can choose a different protein food like peanut butter the next week. It is important to also talk to participants about any cultural food needs that can be considered in the supplements provided.

The suggested food supplements should:

- provide nutrients of special concern in pregnancy and nursing;
- typically, be liked or accepted by participants;
- be something a participant could eat every day;
- be easy to use;
- be versatile;
- be reasonably priced; and
- be readily available.

Need more information?

Your Regional Nutritionist can help if a participant has special food needs or if you have questions about food supplements.

REGION	REGIONAL NUTRITIONIST	PHONE	EMAIL
EASTERN-URBAN	Tracy English	709-752-4911	tracy.english@nlhealthservices.ca
EASTERN-RURAL	Jennifer Stamp	709-229-1575	jennifer.stamp@nlhealthservices.ca
CENTRAL	Jennifer Stamp	709-229-1575	jennifer.stamp@nlhealthservices.ca
WESTERN	Kailey Pauls	709-784-6130	kailey.pauls@nlhealthservices.ca
LABRADOR-GRENFELL	Hannah Buckle		hannah.buckle@nlhealthservices.ca

Recommended Food Supplements and Substitutions

Category	Recommended Supplements, per week	Substitutions*
Calcium and vitamin D rich protein foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 L white milk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For participants aged 18 and under, consider giving up to 6 liters of milk per week, as they have higher calcium needs. <p>Note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ fresh milk, or ○ ultra-high temperature milk (UHT) like Grand Pré, or ○ powdered milk (1 kg of powdered milk makes about 10 L of liquid milk). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 L fortified soy beverage (unsweetened) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Plant-based beverages like almond, rice, oat, and coconut milk are not protein foods. They also do not provide the same nutritional benefits as milk or fortified soy beverage. Therefore, they should not be used as substitutes for milk or fortified soy beverage.
Iron rich protein foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One dozen eggs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 500 g jar/tub of peanut butter, or • 2 cans of light tuna (not white/albacore) (170 g each), or • 2 cans of beans (e.g., kidney, black, baked), chickpeas or lentils, or • 2 packages of firm/extra firm tofu (approximately 300 g each), or • 1 lb. of meat, fish or poultry. <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Canada advises people who are pregnant or nursing to limit the amount of white (albacore) tuna they eat. This is because white (albacore tuna) may contain mercury. • Encourage the use of locally harvested wild game, fish and other traditional foods. These may be available through community freezers, donations from hunters, or local fish plants. Indigenous communities may access wild game in other ways.

Category	Recommended Supplements, per week	Substitutions*
Vegetables and fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bag of oranges or clementines/mandarins (size may range from 2-3 lb.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 lb. bag of potatoes, or • 1 bag of frozen berries (approximately 600 g) or a tub of local berries, or • 1 bag of frozen broccoli or mixed vegetables (approximately 500 g), or • 2 cans of tomatoes (796 mL each), or • 2 jars/cans tomato-based pasta sauce (approximately 600-700 mL each), or • 2 large cans (796 mL each) or 4 small cans (398 mL each) of fruit (packed in juice), such as mandarins and pineapple. <p>Note: orange juice is not a substitution for oranges.</p>
Whole grain foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 loaf of whole grain or whole wheat bread <p>Note: if whole grain or whole wheat options are not available, you can provide white options as a substitution.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 box of whole grain or whole wheat pasta (375 g), or • 1 box of whole grain or whole wheat cereal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cold (e.g., 350-425 g) ○ Hot cereal such as rolled oats (e.g., 1 kg) <p>Note: if whole grain or whole wheat options are not available, you can provide white options as a substitution.</p>

*Offer substitutions if:

- the participant does not like the recommended supplement,
- the recommended supplement is not available or is too expensive, or
- the participant wants variety or a more culturally appropriate option.