

# Weight Gain in Pregnancy

Note to the Health Care Provider: Topics in this handout are discussed in Chapter 6 of the *American Dietetic Association Guide to Gestational Diabetes Mellitus* (1).

## **When counseling women with gestational diabetes mellitus about weight gain in pregnancy, consider the following:**

- ◇ Explain the importance of adequate weight gain in pregnancy. Review the weight gain guidelines based on the woman's prepregnancy body mass index (BMI).
- ◇ Advise the woman to avoid diets that may lead to weight loss. Studies have shown that inadequate weight gain, regardless of prepregnancy BMI, is associated with low birth weight and with preterm delivery in the second and third trimesters.
- ◇ Explain to the woman that her weight will be monitored and that her food plan may be adjusted depending on the amount of weight gained between visits.

## **Reference**

1. Thomas AM, Gutierrez YM. Medical nutrition therapy. In: *American Dietetic Association Guide to Gestational Diabetes Mellitus*. Chicago, IL: American Dietetic Association; 2005:45-64.

# Weight Gain in Pregnancy



Gaining the right amount of weight while you are pregnant helps you and your baby to be healthy. The health of your baby can be affected by:

- ◇ How much you weighed before you were pregnant
- ◇ How much weight you gain while you are pregnant

If you have gestational diabetes, you should **not** try to lose weight in hopes of keeping your blood glucose levels normal. If you do not eat enough, this can harm your baby. Talk to your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your weight while you are pregnant.

## Gain a Healthy Amount of Weight for You

Your doctor will tell you how much weight you should gain while you are pregnant. Try to meet this goal, instead of gaining less or more weight than the doctor recommends.

If you gain too little weight:

- ◇ Your baby may be born too small.
- ◇ Your baby may be born too early.
- ◇ You may need a cesarean section (C-section), because your baby may be too weak for normal childbirth.

If you gain too much weight:

- ◇ Your baby may be born too big.
- ◇ You may need a C-section because your baby is too big.
- ◇ Childbirth may be difficult for both you and your baby.
- ◇ You may find it harder to lose the extra weight after your baby is born.

# Weight Gain and Your Body Mass Index

To decide how much weight you should gain during pregnancy, your doctor may use your body mass index (or BMI). BMI is a tool to find out whether a person is at normal weight, underweight, or overweight. BMI is based on a person's height and weight. If you are pregnant, BMI is based on your height and what you weighed just before you became pregnant. You can use Table 1 in this handout to find your BMI.



**Table 1. How to Find Your Body Mass Index (BMI)**

1. Use the column on the left to find your height.
2. Run your finger across the row with your height until you find your weight. (If you are pregnant, use the weight you were just before you became pregnant.) Stop there.
3. Run your finger up to the row at the top of the chart to find your BMI. Your BMI will be in the section for normal, overweight, or obese.

	Normal						Overweight						Obese								
BMI	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
Height (feet & inches)	Weight (pounds)																				
4'10"	91	96	100	105	110	115	119	124	129	134	138	143	148	153	158	162	167	172	177	181	186
4'11"	94	99	104	109	114	119	124	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	173	178	183	188	193
5'	97	102	107	112	118	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	174	179	184	189	194	199
5'1"	100	106	111	116	122	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	164	169	174	180	185	190	195	201	206
5'2"	104	109	115	120	126	131	136	142	147	153	158	164	169	175	180	186	191	196	202	207	213
5'3"	107	113	118	124	130	135	141	146	152	158	163	169	175	180	186	191	197	203	208	214	220
5'4"	110	116	122	128	134	140	145	151	157	163	169	174	180	186	192	197	204	209	215	221	227
5'5"	114	120	126	132	138	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	186	192	198	204	210	216	222	228	234
5'6"	118	124	130	136	142	148	155	161	167	173	179	186	192	198	204	210	216	223	229	235	241
5'7"	121	127	134	140	146	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	198	204	211	217	223	230	236	242	249
5'8"	125	131	138	144	151	158	164	171	177	184	190	197	203	210	216	223	230	236	243	249	256
5'9"	128	135	142	149	155	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	209	216	223	230	236	243	250	257	263
5'10"	132	139	146	153	160	167	174	181	188	195	202	209	216	222	229	236	243	250	257	264	271
5'11"	136	143	150	157	165	172	179	186	193	200	208	215	222	229	236	243	250	257	265	272	279
6'	140	147	154	162	169	177	184	191	199	206	213	221	228	235	242	250	258	265	272	279	287

Table 2 shows how doctors may use your BMI to decide how much weight you should gain during your pregnancy. Table 2 also lists the amount you should gain each week.

**Table 2. Weight Gain While You Are Pregnant**

Category	Your Body Mass Index (BMI)	Total Weight You Should Gain While Pregnant	Amount of Weight to Gain Each Week, Beginning in the 4th Month
Underweight	Less than 18.5	28-40 pounds	1½ pounds
Normal weight	18.5-24.9	25-35 pounds	1 pound
Overweight	25-29.9	15-25 pounds	⅔ pound
Obese	30 and higher	Around 15 pounds	½ pound

Your doctor will plot your weight on a graph each time you visit. This graph keeps track of how much weight you gain between visits.

Keep in mind that your doctor will use the BMI only as a guide. Some women who gain more or less weight than the goals set according to their BMI have healthy babies.

## How Your Body Uses the Weight You Gain While You Are Pregnant

Many pregnant women wonder, “Why do I have to gain so much more weight than the baby will weigh when he or she is born?” Table 3 shows how the weight you gain during pregnancy is distributed.

**Table 3: Pregnancy Weight**

Use for the Weight	Pounds
Baby	6½-7½ pounds
Uterus or womb	1-2 pounds
Placenta	1-1½ pounds
Amniotic fluid (the bag of fluid around the baby)	1½-2 pounds
Breasts	1-2 pounds
Extra blood	4-5 pounds
Extra fluid	5-7 pounds
Extra weight (fat, to help you make milk for breastfeeding)	5-8 pounds
<b>Total weight</b>	<b>25-35 pounds</b>