



## Diet and pregnancy

Proper nutrition during pregnancy is important for the growth and development of a baby in its mother's womb, but is no less important for the health and wellbeing of the mother herself. It is important for pregnant women to get **variety** in their diet so that they will receive all the necessary nutrients from their food, and this is best guaranteed by consuming the following on a daily basis: all types of fruits and vegetables, preferably at every meal and as snacks; grain products rich in fibre, such as breakfast cereals, oatmeal and whole grain bread; fresh meat or fish, eggs or bean/lentil dishes; low-fat dairy products; and water to drink.

Since taking **folic acid** (vitamin B<sub>9</sub>, also known as folacin) reduces the likelihood of fetal damage, all pregnant women and women who plan on conceiving a child are advised to take one 400 microgram folic acid tablet a day and to be sure to eat foods rich in **folates** (the form of the vitamin found in food), such as fruits, vegetables and breakfast cereals enriched with folic acid. Pregnant women are also advised to take vitamin D, for example a teaspoon of cod liver oil (5 ml), a fish liver oil capsule or a multivitamin containing vitamin D daily. Women may be advised by doctors or midwives to take iron supplements during the latter part of their pregnancy if iron deficiency develops. However, there is no need for a pregnant woman to take multivitamins unless there is reason for her to suspect that her diet is not well-balanced enough. It is **never** desirable to take more than the recommended daily intake of vitamins and minerals during one's pregnancy – if a pregnant woman is taking both fish-liver oil and multivitamins it is important for her to choose multivitamins that do not contain vitamin A. Pollock liver oil (ufsalýsi), liver and foods made from liver (such as liver sausage, liver pâté and liverwurst) should not be eaten during pregnancy as they contain a much higher amount of vitamin A than the recommended daily intake. Fish and other seafood are rich in important nutrients that other foods contain little of. Therefore, pregnant. For this reason, expectant mothers are advised, as are everyone else, to eat fish at least twice a week, preferably more often, and choose both fatty and lean fish. Pregnant women, however, should not eat fish raw.

Proper preparation of foods and good food hygiene are especially important during pregnancy. Pregnant women should also **avoid the following foods** during pregnancy: raw fish (including dried fish such as driedfish), raw meat, cured fish, cold-smoked fish, sushi containing raw fish, cod liver, shark, swordfish, large halibut, fulmar, and fulmar eggs. It is best to keep consumption of coffee, tea, colas and energy drinks to a minimum. Avoid alcohol, drugs and tobacco altogether as these directly harm the fetus. Herbal products and food supplements should also be avoided. Pregnant women should never take medication without first consulting a doctor, midwife or pharmacist, whether the medication requires a prescription or not, making sure to inform all those they consult that they are expecting a child. Good oral hygiene is important during pregnancy – pregnant women should brush their teeth both often and regularly (using a soft toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste) and floss daily. They should also exercise for a minimum of 30 minutes every day.