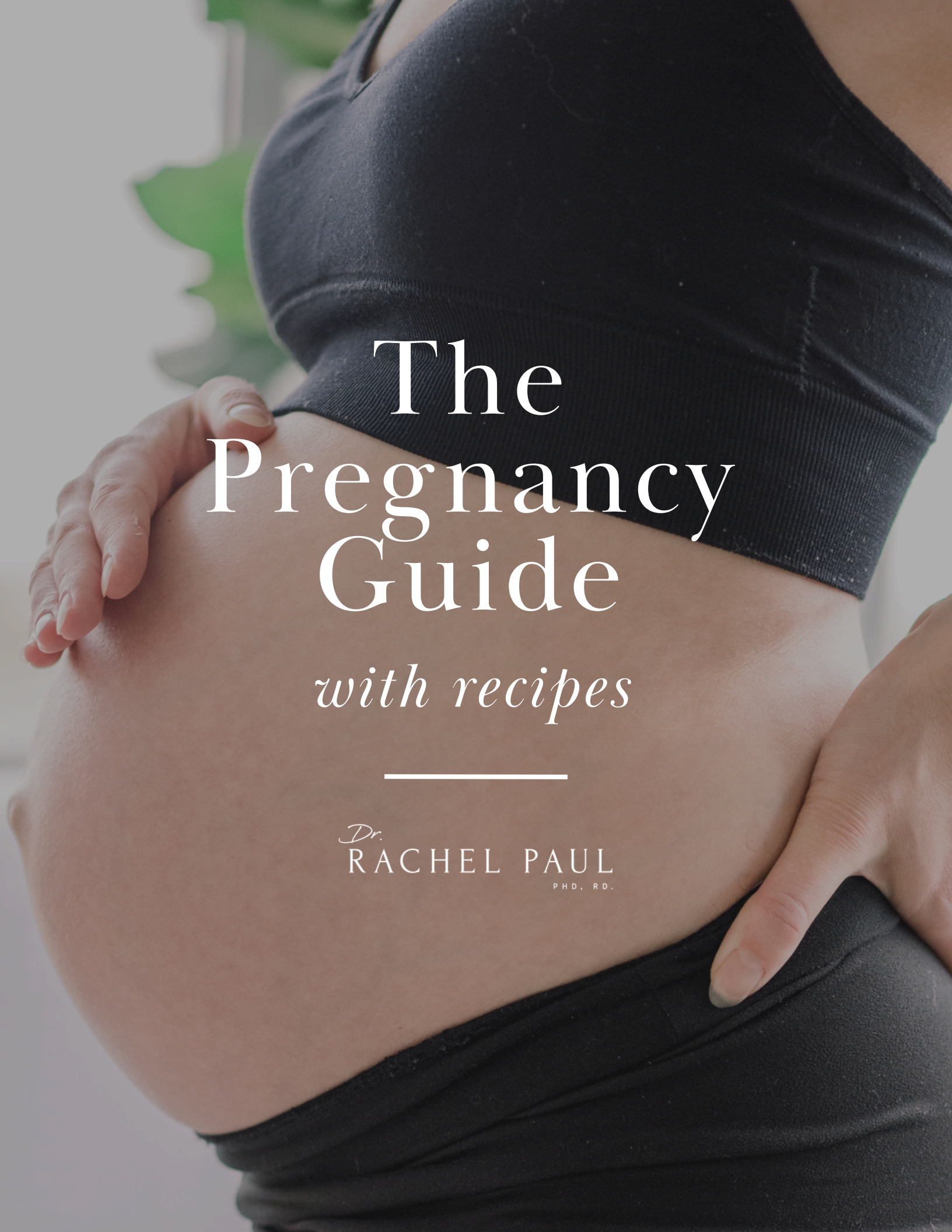

The Pregnancy Guide

with recipes

Dr. RACHEL PAUL
PHD, RD.

Welcome!

I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE!



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The information in this guide is not meant to substitute for any dietary regimen or advice that may have been prescribed by your doctor. As with all dietary programs, you should get your doctor's approval before beginning. If you suspect you have a medical problem, I urge you to seek competent help. Keep in mind that nutritional needs vary from person to person. The information here is intended to help you make informed decisions about your eating and health. This guide is meant to be a guide for your food choices; it does not recommend you eliminate any foods from your diet in its entirety. This guide Is also not for those who are under 18 years, or who have specific medical conditions. Read more here: collegenutritionist.com/terms-conditions

Dr. RACHEL PAUL
PHD, RD.

The Pregnancy Guide

An important note: I am not your doctor, and prenatal nutrition is not my specific area of expertise. However, I've done a lot of my reading and research on this topic - I'm, of course, passionate about this area as a registered dietitian and having gone through two pregnancies myself. Always talk to your doctor first before making any dietary changes - especially during a critical time like pregnancy. There are many fantastic prenatal dietitians to check out for more information. I love Lily Nichols, RDN, and Ryann Kipping, RDN just to name a few.



1. Nutrients to Focus On

Here are a few nutrients to focus on during pregnancy. This is certainly not an exhaustive list - but it does highlight some of the most important ones.

Probiotics & Prebiotics: Probiotics and prebiotics are vital in shaping our gut microbiome, which is essential for overall health (1). During pregnancy, maintaining a robust microbiome is not only beneficial for maternal health but also important for preventing complications such as preterm birth, preeclampsia, gestational diabetes, and excessive weight gain (2). Here are some excellent food sources for both:

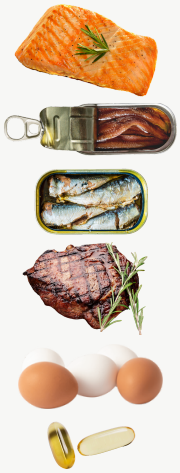
BEST FOOD SOURCES OF PREBIOTICS		BEST FOOD SOURCES OF PROBIOTICS	
	• Garlic • Onions • Asparagus • Oats • Legumes (e.g. lentils, chickpeas, & beans) • Apples • Flaxseeds (ground) • Barley • Seaweed • Cocoa • Potatoes		• Kefir • Miso • Yogurt, including Greek yogurt • Tempeh • Sauerkraut • Kombucha • Pickles (refrigerated, made without vinegar) • Tzatziki sauce made with Greek yogurt • Fermented Cheeses (e.g., aged gouda, cheddar, Swiss, provolone, Gruyère) • Cottage cheese

Diversity in your diet is key to nurturing a wide array of beneficial bacteria and fibers. If you opt for supplementation, choose products with at least 30 billion CFUs per serving that contain both Lactobacillus and Bifidus strains. Certain strains, such as Lactobacillus rhamnosus GR-1® and Lactobacillus reuteri RC-14®, are particularly beneficial for vaginal health during pregnancy (2).

1. Nutrients to Focus On

CONTINUED

Omega-3s: Omega-3s are fatty acids required for your baby's brain and eye development during pregnancy. Omega-3s are incorporated into the baby's rapidly growing brain cells, help protect the brain from inflammation and damage (3), and may prevent preterm labor (4). Your baby accumulates an average of 67 mg of DHA daily in the last trimester, and this need continues for at least the first two years of life (5, 6).

GREAT FOOD SOURCES OF OMEGA-3S	
	• Salmon • Anchovies • Sardines • 100% grass-fed beef • Pasture-raised eggs • Algae-based supplements, if you don’t eat seafood

If you don’t like fish and/or the above food sources, consider a high-quality DHA supplement. It's important to choose a supplement that includes both EPA (the omega-3 fat that aids DHA transport across the placenta) and DHA (7).

1. Nutrients to Focus On

CONTINUED

Glycine: Glycine is an amino acid (one of the building blocks of proteins) that supports the expanding uterus and skin, helps develop the placenta, and helps manage blood pressure (8).

GREAT FOOD SOURCES OF GLYCINE	
	• Chicken skin (e.g., try a roasted or rotisserie chicken) • Ground beef • Pork rinds • Bone broth

Folate: Folate is important for preventing birth defects by eating and supplementing the correct form, L-methylfolate (9, 10). Research suggests that up to 60% of people may have a genetic variant (MTHFR enzyme) that limits their ability to use synthetic (i.e. made in the lab) folic acid (10).

GREAT FOOD SOURCES OF FOLATE	
	• Liver • Eggs (including the yolk) • Leafy greens (e.g., spinach, kale, collard greens) • Avocado • Legumes (e.g., lentils, chickpeas) • Nuts (e.g., almonds)

1. Nutrients to Focus On

CONTINUED

Choline: Choline is a crucial nutrient for fetal brain development and helps prevent neural tube defects (11). Getting enough in utero and while breastfeeding may help prevent the memory decline of your baby later in life (12).

Recent research suggests that higher choline intake than the current recommendation may have added brain development benefits (13). If you have the common MTHFR genetic mutation (you can ask your doctor for the test), your choline needs may be even higher (14).

GREAT FOOD SOURCES OF CHOLINE	
	• Liver • Whole eggs, including the yolk • Fish (choose ones with less mercury e.g., salmon, cod) • Poultry (e.g., chicken breast, turkey) • Legumes (e.g., kidney beans, chickpeas) • Nuts (e.g., almonds) • Cruciferous vegetables (e.g., broccoli, cauliflower)

A choline supplement may be necessary if you cannot eat the above food sources - particularly the animal-based ones. Talk to your doctor.

1. Nutrients to Focus On

CONTINUED

Iron: Iron requirements increase significantly during pregnancy to support your baby's development and blood production (15). Iron deficiency during pregnancy can lead to premature birth, low birth weight, and neurodevelopmental issues for your baby (16, 17). Anemia and iron deficiency are common during and after pregnancy, especially among those who do not eat animal products. Discuss your iron levels with your doctor.

There are two types of iron:
1. Heme iron: found in animal foods
2. Non-heme iron: found in plant-based foods.

You can enhance the absorption of all iron foods by pairing them with foods high in vitamin C (e.g., leafy greens) and avoid pairing them with calcium-rich foods (e.g., cheese). Cast iron cookware can also boost iron content in your meals (18).

GREAT FOOD SOURCES OF HEME IRON (MORE ABSORBABLE)		GREAT FOOD SOURCES OF NON-HEME IRON (LESS ABSORBABLE)	
	• Liver • Oysters (only consume cooked) • Sardines • Ground beef • Clams (only consume cooked) • Lamb • Ground turkey • Chicken thighs & breast • Wild salmon		• Beans (e.g., black, kidney, chickpeas) • Lentils (green or brown) • Tofu (especially if fortified with iron) • Leafy greens (e.g., Swiss chard, spinach, kale, collared greens, mustard greens)

Many women following a heme-iron-rich (i.e., animal-rich) diet won't need supplements during pregnancy. Iron supplements may cause unpleasant side effects like constipation, nausea, and heartburn - so if you're open to eating animal-based sources, that will likely be more pleasant (19). Of course - talk to your doctor about what's best for you, and likely your doctor will test you for iron deficiencies throughout your pregnancy.

1. Nutrients to Focus On

CONTINUED

Iodine: Iodine is critical for the baby's brain development. A lack of iodine in early pregnancy can potentially result in lower IQ scores or, in severe cases, permanent intellectual disability for the child (20). Iodine deficiency is the leading cause of preventable mental retardation worldwide. Milder forms of prenatal iodine deficiency have been linked to hyperactivity and attention deficit disorders in children (21).

GREAT SOURCES OF IODINE	
	• Seaweed (e.g. kelp, nori, wakame) • Fish and shellfish (stick to lower mercury ones like salmon and shrimp) • Dairy products (e.g. milk, yogurt, cheese) • Eggs • Iodized salt

Electrolytes: While pregnant, your body has an increased need for electrolytes, especially due to the higher fluid levels in the body. Electrolytes support various physiological functions, including maintaining energy levels, regulating heart function, preventing common discomforts such as headaches and leg cramps, and facilitating neural signaling (22). Salt also helps to preserve food in a way that helps keep you from getting sick from foodborne illnesses (23).

Limiting salt intake during pregnancy could potentially impact the baby's hormonal, blood vessel, and kidney systems, which are responsible for maintaining the right balance of fluids in the baby's body (80). Plus, lower salt intake can hinder your blood sugar regulation during pregnancy, which isn't what you want, pregnant or not (24).

Unless advised otherwise by your doctor, it's okay to salt your food. I recommend unrefined salt brands (which contain many more electrolytes than regular table salt), Jacobsen salt, or Saltverk Flaky Sea Salt. You can find these at many stores, including Amazon. Trust your taste buds to guide how much salt you need.

1. Nutrients to Focus On

CONTINUED

Vitamin D: Vitamin D deficiency is common during pregnancy and can have serious consequences for you and the baby. Severe vitamin D deficiency during pregnancy can lead to complications such as gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, preterm birth, risk of asthma, language impairment, schizophrenia, type 1 diabetes, and multiple sclerosis (25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32).

Few foods naturally contain vitamin D; the best source is sunlight, especially during mid-day, without sunscreen. Other factors limit the optimal absorption into the body, including skin color, distance from the equator, etc. (33). You may want to consider supplementation (see more information under "Prenatal Vitamins" below).

Magnesium: Magnesium deficiency is another common deficiency during pregnancy. Studies have shown that a lack of magnesium, particularly when there is an excess of calcium, may increase preeclampsia (34). While many women may not experience noticeable symptoms of magnesium deficiency, muscle cramps can indicate that the body is not receiving enough magnesium (35).

BEST FOOD SOURCES OF MAGNESIUM	
	• Seeds (e.g., pumpkin, sunflower, sesame)
	• Chia Seeds
	• Nuts (e.g., Brazil nuts, almonds, cashews)
	• Dark chocolate
	• Seaweed
	• Green Leafy Vegetables (e.g., spinach, kale)
	• Avocados
	• Green Herbs (e.g., chives, cilantro, parsley, mint, dill, sage, and basil)
	• Bone Broth

1. Nutrients to Focus On

CONTINUED

Prenatal Vitamins: Lily Nichols keeps an updated list of the best prenatal vitamins on her website here.

Personally: I take either SmartyPants if I'm feeling nauseous, or FullWell if I can manage to swallow a pill. I also took an additional vitamin D3/K2 on some days (maybe 40%) since I live in a northern climate (see above Vitamin D section).



2. Foods to Eat Frequently

Based on the above important nutrients, do your best to eat the following foods regularly. Skip down to the Recipes section of this guide to see how to put these foods into practical use. Of course, eating a variety of whole, real foods from all food groups is the best way to go.

FOODS TO EAT FREQUENTLY

FOOD	NOTES
 Eggs	Choose pasture-raised and/or organic eggs when in your budget.
 Dairy	Choose full-fat, 100% grass-fed, and/or organic when possible. Choose unsweetened yogurt, or yogurt sweetened with real fruit or stevia/monk fruit.
 Poultry	Choose pasture-raised and/or organic if possible. Eat all parts of the chicken - skin, thighs etc. (not just chicken breast).
 Red Meat	Choose 100% grass-fed and/or organic if in your budget. Ground beef is often the cheapest. "Chuck" is a great cut for the slow cooker.
 Seafood	Choose low-mercury, high-omega-3 seafood options like salmon and sardines. Choose wild-caught options when you can.
 Leafy-Green Vegetables	Choose organic if it's in your budget. (e.g. spinach, kale)
 Cruciferous Vegetables	Choose organic if it's in your budget. (e.g. broccoli, cauliflower)
 Avocado	Choose organic if it's in your budget.
 Nuts & Seeds	Choose a variety of nuts & seeds to get a variety of benefits. If available, choose organic.
 Legumes	Choose organic and if buying canned, brands that don't use BPA in the cans. (e.g. beans, lentils)
 Sauerkraut & Pickles	Choose ones NOT made with vinegar (look at the ingredients list) so that the probiotics are preserved. If you can find organic, choose that too.
 Unrefined Salt	Jacobsen and Saltverk are both great brands.

Please note I specifically say "when possible" and "in your budget" above. In NO WAY do I eat "perfectly" or from this list all the time. This is real life!

BEST BODY by DR. RACHEL PAUL PHD, RD

2. Foods to Eat Frequently

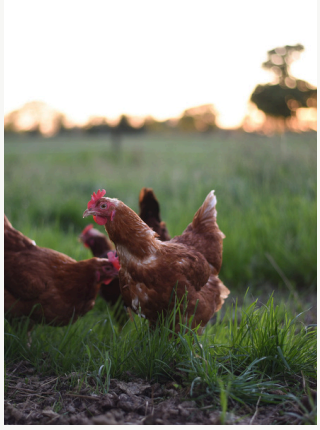
CONTINUED

FOOD QUALITY

Why am I focusing on these terms? Here's what they mean & why they're important:



Organic: means farming practices without synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, antibiotics, or hormones - which decreases pesticide exposure and promotes soil health for higher nutrient content in food, such as vitamins, carotenoids, unsaturated fatty acids, and polyphenols (36, 37, 38, 39). Organic foods also don't contain artificial sweeteners or GMOs. Choosing organic foods during pregnancy can help reduce pesticide exposure, increase important nutrients for fetal development, and potentially decrease the likelihood of pre-eclampsia (39, 40).



Pasture-raised: means that animals are grazed on natural pastureland and have access to a natural outdoor environment. This leads to, for example, eggs with more omega-3 fatty acids and vitamins A and E compared to conventional eggs. These chickens also have a natural diet, including insects and green plants, which increases their omega-3 fatty acid levels. On average, pasture-raised chickens might have two to three times more omega-3s than conventionally raised chickens, but this can vary (41).



100% Grass-Fed (or "Grass-fed and Finished"): refers to products where animals are fed solely on grass after being weaned from their mother's milk. This results in meat lower in total fat but higher in essential fatty acids such as crucial omega-3s, which are important for fetal development & maternal health (42).

2. Foods to Eat Frequently

CONTINUED

SAVING MONEY

Yes... all of this can get expensive! High quality food should be the norm, not the exception. Here are some ways to make this way of eating more affordable.









Meal plan: Create a weekly meal plan (use Best Body!) to ensure you make the most of your grocery budget and eat supportive meals. This will decrease food waste while ensuring you get the nutrients for a healthy pregnancy.

Shop at cheaper stores: If you're in the US, Trader Joe's and Aldi have cheap, 100% grass-fed ground beef, and their grass-fed filet steaks are delicious.

Farmers' markets and butchers: Other ways to get high-quality meat for cheaper are to shop at Farmer's Markets, go to a butcher & see what they have on sale.

Subscription services: Subscribe to a box service like Thrive Market or Butcher Box (if you know you'll get through all the meat).



Meal Ideas for TTC, Pregnancy & Postpartum



Easy Salmon Salad

426 CALORIES • 19GM PROTEIN • 6GM FIBER

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz canned salmon
- 1 cup celery stalks
- 1 cucumber
- 1 Tbsp hot sauce
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 Tbsp red wine vinegar
- 1 Tbsp dijon mustard
- ⅛ tsp salt
- ⅛ tsp pepper
- 1 slice of bread

DIRECTIONS

1. Dice celery and cucumber
2. Combine all ingredients besides bread in a bowl, and mix to combine
3. Toast bread and have it on the side

RECIPE IN BEST BODY



Rotisserie Chicken Chopped Salad

526 CALORIES • 44GM PROTEIN • 2M FIBER

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz rotisserie chicken
- 2 eggs
- 3/4 cup cucumber
- 2 slices uncured bacon
- 1/4 avocado
- 1/3 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- salt & pepper

RECIPE IN BEST BODY

***NOTE**: Some doctors do not recommend eating rotisserie chicken while pregnant. Talk to your doctor before using this recipe, if you are currently pregnant.*

DIRECTIONS

1. Slice bacon into small pieces
2. Cook bacon on the stove top on low heat, until bacon has cooked through
3. Hard boil egg by bringing egg to a boil in a pot of water, and boiling for 7 minutes. Once cooled, slice egg into small pieces.
4. Chop rotisserie chicken, avocado, and cucumber into small pieces.
5. Combine all ingredients in a bowl, top with balsamic vinegar, salt & pepper. Mix to combine and enjoy!
6. No meat? Use black beans instead of the chicken, and more avocado or soy bacon instead of the bacon.



Basic B Chili with Spicy Cauli Rice

355 CALORIES • 33GM PROTEIN • 8GM FIBER

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz 90% lean ground beef
- 1 cup canned diced tomatoes
- 1 carrot
- ¼ cup celery stalks
- ¼ yellow onion
- 2 Tbsp grated Parmesan
- 1 cup cauliflower rice
- ⅛ tsp cumin
- ⅛ tsp chili seasoning
- ⅛ tsp garlic salt
- ⅛ tsp red pepper flakes

RECIPE IN BEST BODY

DIRECTIONS

1. Dice carrot, onion, and celery.
2. Spray a pan with an oil spray. Stir fry beef on medium heat 7-8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until no longer pink.
3. While beef is cooking, spray a pot with an oil spray. Cook carrots, onion, and celery for ~6-7 minutes on low heat, stirring occasionally.
4. Add in tomatoes and beef to the pot with the veggies. Add in cumin, chili powder, garlic salt, red pepper flakes.
5. Cook pot's contents on low heat for at least 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
6. While chili is cooking, clean the ground beef pan and spray it again with an oil spray. Stir-fry cauliflower rice for 7-8 minutes on medium heat, or until you see some browning.
7. Add in Parmesan cheese, cumin, and chili powder.
8. Top cauli rice with chili and serve.
9. If you want to add a little cilantro and/or sliced jalapeno please do!
10. No beef? Use ground turkey, tofu, or beans instead. No cheese? Use a dairy-free cheese, top chili with a little avocado, or use oil instead of an oil spray.



Greek Yogurt with Berries

190 CALORIES • 17GM PROTEIN • 9M FIBER

INGREDIENTS

- 1 container of single-serving 2% Greek yogurt
- 1 cup frozen raspberries

RECIPE IN BEST BODY

DIRECTIONS

1. Let berries melt for a few minutes before adding them to the plain yogurt – their juices will really mix in so you don't need to buy a flavored yogurt.
2. If you're on the go: Add the berries to the yogurt the night before and refrigerate (no need to let them melt first) in a mason jar.
3. No dairy? Use a dairy-free yogurt.



Do you want to stop dieting, and permanently lose 5 to 50+ pounds?

Are you sick of eating “perfectly” all day and then overdoing it at night?
Do you want to feel totally in control around food, and stop emotional eating?
Are you tired of wasting food in your fridge, money on expensive supplements, or your whole weekend making complicated, 20-ingredient recipes?
Do you know you’re not living to your fullest potential, because you're not feeling confident or have low self esteem?

I'D LOVE FOR YOU TO JOIN...

BEST BODY

by DR. RACHEL PAUL PHD,RD.

The simple system to lose weight permanently and finally feel in control around food.

- Permanently lose 5-50 pounds
- Feel totally in control around food
- Have simple, tasty, wholesome recipes
- Feel absolutely confident

BEST BODY

by DR. RACHEL PAUL PHD,RD.

My proven program to help you become your best self



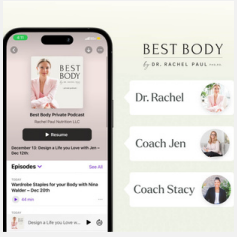
1. CREATE YOUR PERSONALIZED PLAN

I walk you through creating a plan that specifically works for YOU – for your body's needs, lifestyle, food preferences – during the week, on the weekend, during special events, etc. in video lessons.



2. SIMPLIFY YOUR MEAL PLANNING

I make eating healthy SO EASY for you with the Best Body Meal Planner. Through my interactive meal planning tool with 1600+ simple meal, snack, and dessert options, you can either create plans based on what's already in your fridge, or follow the plans I create each week.



3. WEEKLY COACHING CALLS

I'm so excited to bring you 2-3 group calls a week, where my amazing team of coaches and I will help you with any personal struggles, and answer all of your questions. Calls are at various days and times to accommodate schedules/time zones, and are recorded and uploaded to our private podcast, so you can listen anytime.



4. COMPLETE MINDSET TRAINING

You'll get my Complete Mindset Mastery Training. I teach you mindset shifts for every situation you may encounter: stress eating in the afternoon, overeating on the weekends, dealing with your mother-in-law, etc. through video lessons



5. SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

Our Best Body community is unlike any other! Members are by your side to cheer you on, share tips and recipes, and help you overcome any obstacles.



6. NEW TOOLS EACH MONTH

New recipe books, guides, trainings, and coaching calls are available every month on everything from feeling confident in a bathing suit to sitting next to judgmental aunts at Thanksgiving, and more.

I'D LOVE FOR YOU TO JOIN ME IN BEST BODY

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