

Eyes on



## Nutrition:

Developing healthy eating habits during pregnancy



CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE FOR CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING

Early Childhood Development

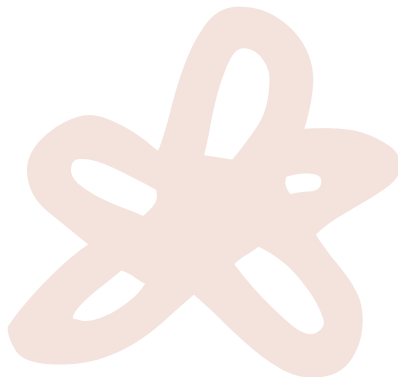
PARENTS



***“Pregnancy is one of the most important developmental periods in life.”***

## What do we know?

- Pregnancy is one of the most important developmental periods in life.
- Pregnant women should consume plenty of high-quality nutrients essential for the foetus development.
- Pregnant women should also eat foods rich in folate (B vitamins), iron and calcium, to ensure their foetus gets the elements it needs to develop.
- Women who lack essential nutrients at the start of pregnancy put their own health at risk and perpetuate a cycle of poor mother-child nutrition.
- A lack of essential nutrients during pregnancy, when the child’s brain is growing most rapidly, can have very long-term effects on the child’s physical and intellectual development and performance in school.
- Poor nutrition in pregnancy can also cause the child to suffer from heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, poor immune system or depression.
- Pregnant women living in disadvantaged situations have more difficulty ensuring proper nutrition.



## Paying attention to...

... eat, from the beginning of pregnancy, foods with elements that are essential to foetal development.

---

... inform all pregnant women, from the beginning of pregnancy, about good eating habits to adopt to keep themselves and their babies healthy.

## What can be done?

- Eat foods every day that are rich in folate (spinach), protein (meat, fish, eggs), vitamin A (fatty fish and milk products), vitamin C (fresh parsley, peppers, kiwis, citrus fruit), calcium (milk products) and iron (blood pudding, meat, seafood, fish, beans).
  - Eat enriched foods every day, such as iron-enriched cereals.
  - Consume more milk, eggs, cheese, fruits and vegetables, nuts and beans.
  - Avoid alcohol during pregnancy.
- 
- Guide pregnant women toward health professionals (nutritionists, nurses, doctors).





# Information

The Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development identifies and summarizes the best scientific work on the social and emotional development of young children. It disseminates this knowledge to a variety of audiences in formats and languages adapted to their needs.

For a more in-depth understanding of nutrition during pregnancy, consult our experts' articles in the Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, available free of charge at [www.child-encyclopedia.com](http://www.child-encyclopedia.com).

This information sheet is published by the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development, one of four Centres of Excellence for Children's Well-Being. Funding for the Centres of Excellence is provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors/researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

We are grateful to the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon and the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research for their financial contributions to produce this information sheet.

**Coordinator:**  
Lucie Beaupré

**Collaborators:**  
Isabelle Vinet (CPEQ)  
and Julie Robitaille

**Copyeditor:**  
Lana Crossman

**Translation:**  
Donna Riley

**Graphic design:**  
DesJardins Conception Graphique inc.

## Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development

GRIP-Université de Montréal  
P.O. Box 6128, Succursale Centre-ville  
Montreal, Quebec H3C 3J7  
Telephone: 514.343.6111, extension 2576  
Fax: 514.343.6962  
E-mail: [cedje-ceecd@umontreal.ca](mailto:cedje-ceecd@umontreal.ca)  
Website: [www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca](http://www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca)

