

Fibre for Pregnancy

Kellogg's® Factsheet



Pregnancy is one of the most exciting times in a woman's life, but is also physically challenging as dramatic bodily changes take place whilst the baby grows and develops. Eating well both before and during pregnancy is important to ensure that mum and baby receive all of the nutrition that they both need. Although some women may feel hungrier than usual, it is not necessary to 'eat for two' and this tends to result in unwanted weight gain.

What is a Healthy Diet for Pregnancy?

Healthy eating for pregnancy and breastfeeding are, in essence, similar to healthy eating at any other life stage. Women are advised to: start each day with a healthy breakfast; consume at least 5 portions of a variety of fruits and vegetables; base every meal on starchy carbohydrate foods (preferably wholegrain or high fibre); choose lean protein foods; consume 2-3 portions of dairy foods each day and drink plenty of sugar-free fluids¹.

During pregnancy, the requirement for some vitamins and minerals increases. In general, these can be met by eating a variety of foods, however regularly choosing foods fortified with vitamins and minerals (such as fortified breakfast cereals) can significantly increase vitamin and mineral intakes².

Most bowls of Kellogg's breakfast cereal provide at least 50% of the nutrient reference values (NRV) of folic acid, 25% of NRV of other B-group vitamins and vitamin D and 25% of NRV for iron, providing a valuable boost to a pregnant woman's nutrient intake. In addition, as most cereals are eaten with milk, calcium intake is also increased.

More information on healthy eating during pregnancy, including foods to avoid, can be found on the NHS Choices or Irish Health websites.

Fibre - Essential for Digestive Health During Pregnancy!

Fibre intakes of women in both the UK and Ireland are woefully low at around 17g per day^{3,4}, compared to the recommended intake of 25-30g. One of the effects of pregnancy hormones is to relax muscles, which includes those of the gut, resulting in a slowed passage of food and waste materials and increased sluggishness of the bowels⁵. The combination of pregnancy with a diet low in fibre results in around 40% of pregnant women suffering from constipation⁵ and between 25-35% developing haemorrhoids⁶. In many cases, both of these could be avoided by simple lifestyle changes to increase intake of dietary fibre (particularly wheat bran fibre) and fluids.

40% of women experience the discomfort of constipation during pregnancy and/or after birth⁵.

While women fear the discomfort of constipation, healthcare professionals should also be aware of the increased risk of damage to the nerves and musculature of the pelvic floor. In fact, constipation during pregnancy appears to be as important a cause of pelvic floor damage as obstetric trauma⁷.

How Much Fibre is Needed?

There is no specific advice on fibre intakes for pregnant women. However, clinical guidelines (e.g. NICE 2016) advise increasing intake of dietary fibre (particularly wheat bran fibre) and fluids as a first-line approach to problems with constipation⁸.

Superior Benefits of Wheat Bran Fibre

Wheat bran is the coarse outer coating of the wheat grain, and is proven to increase transit time & increase faecal bulk⁹.

Wheat bran is recommended as it is a more effective laxative compared to other commonly consumed fibre sources¹⁰. Other countries also advise intakes of 28-30g fibre per day to help maintain a healthy bowel during pregnancy¹¹, a level further substantiated by research studies^{12,13}.

The single intervention study carried out among constipated pregnant women suggests that an increase in wheat bran fibre of 10g per day is an effective approach to alleviating this troublesome condition¹⁴. The health claims approved by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in relation to bowel health also assume an intake of wheat bran of around 10g per day⁹.

A Note On Fluids

Europe wide recommendations are to drink 2300ml daily during pregnancy and 2700ml per day whilst breastfeeding¹⁵. Based on average fluid intakes this equates to a 700ml increase in daily intake for pregnancy and 1100mls whilst breastfeeding.³

If women increased wheat bran and fibre intakes by 10g per day, and fluid intakes by around 700ml, many cases of pregnancy related constipation and haemorrhoids could potentially be avoided.

Wheat Bran in Foods

Wheat bran is found in wholewheat breakfast cereals, wholemeal pasta, wholemeal bread, items baked with wholemeal flour e.g. pastry, scones, biscuits etc., and foods with added bran e.g. bran breakfast cereals, bran muffins, bran breadsticks etc. The table below gives ideas on easy ways to boost fibre intake while pregnant.

FOOD	FIBRE PER 100 (g)	FIBRE PER TYPICAL PORTION (g)
Kellogg's All-Bran	27.0g	11.0g
Kellogg's All-Bran Golden Crunch	13.0g	5.4g
Kellogg's Raisin Wheats	9.0g	4.0g
Kellogg's Bran Flakes	15.0g	4.5g
Malted Wholewheat Cereal	11.2g	5.0g
Wholemeal Pitta Bread	6.4g	4.0g
Wholemeal Bread	7.0g	2.6g
Wholemeal Scone	6.9g	3.5g
Wholemeal Spaghetti	3.5g	10.0g

Source: DietPlan v6.70 Forest Field Software (McCance and Widdowson's The Composition of Foods (Sixth Edition)) and brand websites (e.g. Kellogg's, grocery retailers etc)
Note: All fibre values used in this document refer to AOAC figures.


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