

Eggs & Pregnancy



Pregnancy is a time when your body needs extra nutrients to support both your health and your baby's development. Including nutrient dense foods in your meals is one of the best ways to meet these increased needs — and eggs are a great option.

Eggs provide high-quality protein and 17 different vitamins and nutrients, including several key vitamins and minerals that play important roles throughout pregnancy.



How eggs support healthy pregnancy

Eggs provide a range of nutrients for pregnancy, including choline, protein, iodine, folate, vitamin D, and vitamin B12. Below is a breakdown of how each vitamin supports development, and how much of your recommended or adequate intake can be met per serve of two (60g) eggs.

CHOLINE

Choline is an essential nutrient but around 60% of pregnant women in Australia aren't getting enough of it.¹ Eggs are one of the richest dietary sources of choline.

During pregnancy, choline plays a pivotal role in:

- ▶ Foetal brain development and cognitive function
- ▶ Neural tube development
- ▶ Placental function^{2,3}

Adequate intake of choline differs according to life stage. For pregnant women, the adequate intake is 440mg per day and 550mg for lactating women.⁴ Two eggs contain approximately 328mg of choline, meaning one serve of two (60g) eggs per day meets 75% of the adequate intake for pregnancy and 60% for lactation.

Research shows that pregnant women who eat more than 6 eggs per week are seven times more likely to meet their adequate intake compared to those who eat fewer eggs.¹

FOLATE

Folate is a vital nutrient that supports the development of DNA and new cells and is especially important in early pregnancy.

Consuming enough folate supports:

- ▶ The healthy closure of the baby's neural tube
- ▶ Reducing the risk of neural tube defects
- ▶ Healthy, normal growth of the baby

Just one serving of two eggs provides approximately 16% of the recommended dietary intake for pregnancy. This makes eggs a helpful addition to your diet, alongside other folate-rich foods and any supplements your healthcare provider recommends.

References

1 Probst YC, et al. *Nutrients*. 2022;14(7):1359.

2 Oyen J, et al. *Nutrients*. 2022;14(12):2559.

3 Caudill MA, et al. *FASEB J*. 2018;32(4):2172–2180.

4 NHMRC; NZ Ministry of Health. *Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand including Recommended Dietary Intakes*. Canberra: NHMRC; 2006



PROTEIN

Protein requirements increase during pregnancy to support foetal growth, placental development and the growth of maternal tissues. Eggs are a great source of complete high-quality protein, containing all essential amino acids, supporting:

- ▶ Foetal growth and development
- ▶ Placental development and function
- ▶ Maintenance of maternal bone and muscle strength

One serve of two (60g) eggs provides 12.7g of protein, equating to 21% of the recommended daily intake for pregnancy.⁴

IODINE

Iodine is essential for the production of thyroid hormones, which regulate foetal growth and brain development, particularly during early pregnancy. Iodine supports:

- ▶ Your baby's brain development
- ▶ Healthy thyroid hormone production
- ▶ Prevention of iodine deficiency disorders

One serve of two (60g) eggs provides 20% of the recommended dietary intake for pregnancy.⁴

VITAMIN B12

Vitamin B12 helps your body make DNA and aids in maintaining a healthy nervous system. During pregnancy, vitamin B12 supports:

- ▶ Healthy development of your baby's nervous system
- ▶ Reduced risk of anaemia in the mother, which helps maintain energy and overall wellbeing

VITAMIN D

Eggs are one of the few foods that naturally contain vitamin D, a nutrient that helps your body absorb calcium and supports healthy bones and immune function. During pregnancy, getting enough vitamin D is important for:

- ▶ Your baby's bone and skeletal development
- ▶ Maintaining your own bone health
- ▶ Supporting a healthy immune system

Low vitamin D levels are common during pregnancy and have been linked with health concerns for both parent and baby, including impacts to bone development and a higher risk of low birth weight.⁵

One serve of two (60g) eggs provides more than 100% of the adequate intake recommended for vitamin D during pregnancy.⁴



Food safety tips for eating eggs during pregnancy

To reduce the risk of foodborne illness, it's recommended that pregnant women:

- ▶ Only consume well-cooked eggs
- ▶ Avoid raw or undercooked eggs. Ensure eggs are cooked until the yolk and white are firm
- ▶ Follow general food safety guidelines

References

⁵ Saraf R, et al. Matern Child Nutr. 2016;12(4):647–668.

⁶ FSANZ. ANZ Food Standards Code – Standard 1.2.7 Nutrition, Health and Related Claims.

⁷ NSW Food Authority. Foods to eat or avoid when pregnant. Sydney: NSW Government.