More than any other life stage, people believe following expert nutrition advice is “very important” or “important” during pregnancy and from birth to 24 months of age. Health professionals, including registered dietitians, are the most trusted source of nutrition guidance among consumers. You have an important role in helping guide new and expecting mothers’ food choices.

This guide is designed to help you best counsel your patients using the latest nutrition recommendations for prenatal and infant/toddler health, and to give them the confidence and knowledge to make healthier food choices for mom and baby. Review this guide with them and help make a lasting difference in the future of your community.

WHY NUTRITION COUNSELING?

- Scientific evidence shows maternal prenatal nutrition and the child’s nutrition in the first two years of life are critical factors in neurodevelopment and lifelong mental health. Child and adult health risks, including obesity, hypertension and diabetes, may be programmed by nutritional status during this period.2

- Information for women about how much they should eat during pregnancy is still not reaching many families, potentially putting the health of mothers and their babies at risk. — The U.S. population is known to have low intakes of folate, potassium, fiber and vitamins A, D, E and C. This was also found to be true in a national survey of 133 pregnant women.3

- Nutritional counseling during pregnancy is not only the most effective intervention for improving pregnant women’s knowledge and understanding, but also decreases risks for several maternal and fetal complications, including anemia, increased birthweight and preterm delivery.4

NUTRITION FOR MOM

Research has shown key dietary patterns, dietary components and individual nutrients can have a profound impact during pregnancy. Maternal nutrition influences a mother’s ability to conceive and maintain a healthy pregnancy, support infant brain and body development, and produce nutritious breast milk.

HERE ARE SOME KEY NUTRIENTS MOM SHOULD LOOK FOR:

- Oleic Acid (Monounsaturated Fat or MUFA): MUFAs make up a large portion of an infant’s blood fatty acid profile, and research suggests that greater intake of MUFA can help improve a woman’s fertility. During lactation, MUFA is critical to breast milk quality because it helps maintain proper liquidity required for breast milk formation. Along with polyunsaturated fat (PUFA), it is also necessary for structural and functional brain development in the first year of life. Sources include fresh avocado, fatty fish, nuts, seeds and oils.

- Folate: Folate is the best-known nutrient for preventing neural tube defects and some heart defects. The recommended dietary allowance (RDA) for adult women is 400 mcg and needs to increase to 600 mcg during pregnancy. Sources include fresh avocado, dark leafy greens, asparagus, broccoli, oranges, beans, peas and brussels sprouts.

Avocados are a good source of folate (45 mcg per one-third avocado).
• **Lutein and Zeaxanthin**: These carotenoids are critical for proper eye development in utero, especially in the third trimester. What’s more, lutein is preferentially incorporated into breast milk, despite not being one of the predominant carotenoids consumed in the diet. It represents roughly 25% of the carotenoids in breast milk during the first few days of breastfeeding and increases to nearly 50% by the end of the first month. Sources of lutein and zeaxanthin include fresh avocado, leafy greens and egg yolks.

Lutein is the most abundant carotenoid in avocados, and it is absorbed in greater quantities from avocado relative to other fruits and vegetables with low or no fat content. One study found that avocados, likely due to the unique combination of MUFA, fiber, lutein and other bioactives, increased neural lutein levels (aka macular pigment density) 35x greater than what could be achieved by a lutein dietary supplement.6, 7

• **Vitamin A**: Vitamin A is an important antioxidant with a range of functions involving eye health, immune function and neurological development. The RDA for adult women is 700 mcg. These needs increase to 750–770 mcg during pregnancy and 1,200–1,300 mcg during lactation.8 Vitamin A is available in the diet in two different forms: preformed vitamin A or provitamin A. Both forms must be metabolized and converted to the active form of vitamin A. Sources of provitamin A include fresh avocado, carrots, tomatoes, sweet potato and dark leafy greens, while sources of preformed vitamin A include dairy products, fish, eggs and meat.

Pairing fresh avocado with foods containing vitamin A can help increase the absorption of provitamin A carotenoids and significantly increase the conversion to vitamin A.

**WHAT DOES HEALTHY WEIGHT GAIN DURING PREGNANCY LOOK LIKE?**

Recent studies found that only about one-third (32%) of women gain the recommended amount of weight during pregnancy, and most women gain outside the recommendations—21% gaining too little and 48% gaining too much.9 The amount of weight gained during pregnancy can affect the immediate and future health of a mother and her child. Health professionals should determine a woman’s body mass index at the initial prenatal visit and counsel her regarding the benefits of proper weight gain, nutrition and exercise. Healthy weight gain recommendations from the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine are outlined below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prepregnancy Weight Category</th>
<th>Body Mass Index (BMI)*</th>
<th>Recommended Range of Total Weight (lb) (For One Baby)</th>
<th>Recommended Rate of Weight Gain† in the Second and Third Trimester (lb) (Mean Range [lb/wk])</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underweight</td>
<td>Less than 18.5</td>
<td>28–40</td>
<td>1 (1–1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal Weight</td>
<td>18.5–24.9</td>
<td>25–35</td>
<td>1 (0.8–1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>25–29.9</td>
<td>15–25</td>
<td>0.6 (0.5–0.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obese (includes all classes)</td>
<td>30 or greater</td>
<td>11–20</td>
<td>0.5 (0.4–0.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Body mass index is calculated as weight in kilograms divided by height in meters squared or as weight in pounds multiplied by 703 divided by height in inches.

† Calculations assume a 1.1–4.4 pound weight gain in the first trimester.


Learn more about nutrition for mom in *The Role of Avocados in Maternal Diets during the Periconceptional Period, Pregnancy and Lactation*. 
NUTRITION FOR BABY AND TODDLER (FROM BIRTH TO 24 MONTHS)

Nutrition is one of the most important factors when determining the foods to feed an infant or toddler. In fact, observational studies have demonstrated later health benefits of early nutrition choices when infants consumed high amounts of fruits and/or vegetables, such as healthier body weights, lower blood pressure, lower risk of stroke and lower risk for some cancers.

Here are just a few of the many reasons and ways to help boost nutrition during the first 24 months of life.

- Several public health organizations advocate for breastfeeding during the first six months of life, with a transition to a combination of breastfeeding and complementary foods from six months to at least 12 months of age.
  - The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breastfeeding for approximately the first six months of life and continuation after complementary foods have been introduced for at least the first year of life and beyond, as long as mutually desired by mother and child.
  - It is the position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics that exclusive breastfeeding provides optimal nutrition and health protection for the first six months of life, and that breastfeeding with complementary foods from six months until at least 12 months of age is the ideal feeding pattern for infants.
  - The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding up to six months of age, with continued breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary foods up to two years of age or beyond.

- Macronutrients are key for infant and toddler health.
  - In infancy, research suggests dietary fat should comprise about 50% of energy intake to provide adequate energy for rapid growth as well as the essential fatty acids for brain development. Specifically, MUFA has been shown to be important for normal growth and development of the central nervous system and brain, as well as beneficial for fat-soluble nutrient absorption.
  - Avocados have a smooth consistency and texture, and they can be puréed, mashed, sliced or cubed. Their mild, neutral flavor is neither sweet, bitter nor salty. Check out ideas in page 6 and 7.

- Dietary bioactive compounds have an impact on healthy growth and development, including brain health.
  - Carotenoids, like beta-carotene, lutein and zeaxanthin, provide the precursors for vitamin A, an essential nutrient for proper growth, development, vision, immunity, hair and skin health, and mucus membrane formation. They have a functional role in the tissues of the infant brain and may also act as antioxidants.

- Early exposure to texture and flavor can influence acceptability.
  - Food learning and food preferences start in utero and are heavily influenced by breastfeeding and the infant’s complementary diet in the first year of life.
  - It is important to provide a variety of soft textures—such as creamy, tender, puréed, mashed or ground—in order to prevent choking and properly develop swallowing abilities.
  - To establish a varied eating pattern—which includes neutral, sour and bitter taste acceptance—the ideal initial foods should be those that are both nutritious and have a low to moderate sweet and salty flavor profile.

- Fresh avocados are an ideal food for babies and toddlers.

- Currently, there is no infant adequate intake established for fiber, but the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that people between the ages of two and 19 years eat a daily amount of fiber that equals their age plus 5 grams of fiber. For example, 7 grams of fiber are recommended if your child is two years of age (2 plus 5 grams).

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- Avocados have a smooth consistency and texture, and they can be puréed, mashed, sliced or cubed. Their mild, neutral flavor is neither sweet, bitter nor salty. Check out ideas in page 6 and 7.

- Avocados are a nutrient-dense fruit that contains several key nutrients for toddler health and development, including fiber, unsaturated fatty acids, more than 20 vitamins and minerals, and an array of phytonutrients.

- See how avocados stack up against other popular complementary and transitional fruits. (See chart on next page.)
Dietary choices play a major role in the health of both mother and child during pregnancy and lactation. In addition, foods provided during the first 24 months of life can impact a child’s future taste preferences, food choices and overall health. Fresh avocado contains key nutrients that most pregnant women fall short on, such as vitamins A, C, E and potassium, along with folate. With its soft texture, nutrient-dense profile and neutral flavor, avocado makes an ideal first food for children and may serve as a gateway food to more nutritious eating patterns across their lifespan. As a sugar-free fruit option, avocado allows a caregiver to add more fruit to the child’s diet while helping to avoid invoking an early preference for sweet foods.

**MEETING THE DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF TODDLERS AGES 1–3 YEARS**

Comparison of nutrients found in avocado versus the most popular complementary and transitional fruits. Nutrient information is based upon 25 grams of avocado and 70 grams for the other fruits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient</th>
<th>Apple</th>
<th>Pear</th>
<th>Banana</th>
<th>Grapes</th>
<th>Pear</th>
<th>Pear</th>
<th>Pear</th>
<th>Pear</th>
<th>Pear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potassium (mg)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folate (mcg)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutein and Zeaxanthin (mcg)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin K (mcg)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin E (mg)</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUFA (g)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiber (g)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Green box indicates fruits that provide more of the selected nutrients per serving.

Learn more about nutrition for baby in *The Role of Avocados in Complementary and Transitional Feeding*.

**MAKING SMART SHIFTS FOR HEALTHIER DIETARY PATTERNS**

Dietary choices play a major role in the health of both mother and child during pregnancy and lactation. In addition, foods provided during the first 24 months of life can impact a child’s future taste preferences, food choices and overall health. Fresh avocado contains key nutrients that most pregnant women fall short on, such as vitamins A, C, E and potassium, along with folate. With its soft texture, nutrient-dense profile and neutral flavor, avocado makes an ideal first food for children and may serve as a gateway food to more nutritious eating patterns across their lifespan. As a sugar-free fruit option, avocado allows a caregiver to add more fruit to the child’s diet while helping to avoid invoking an early preference for sweet foods.
THREE E’s FOR PATIENT CONSULTATION

EDUCATE:

Share patient-ready resources like the Hass Avocado Board’s Mix, Mash and Love One Today® infographic and the U.S. Center for Disease Control’s Food Safety infographics.

FOOD SAFETY SPOTLIGHT

Pregnant women and children under the age of five are at an increased risk for foodborne illness. Food safety precautions should be taken, including proper hand washing, hygiene and education about foods to eat and avoid.¹⁸

ENGAGE:

Ask your patient to list foods for mom and baby. Work with him or her to identify the important nutrients for mom and baby. Use the list below to get the conversation going:

- **Salmon (omega-3 fatty acids, protein):** Pregnant women can safely consume 8–12 ounces of low-mercury fish, such as salmon, per week. For young children, try serving flaked fish once or twice a week, starting at age two.

- **Avocados (naturally good fats, folate, lutein, fiber):** Avocado can be enjoyed fresh or used as a one-to-one ratio as a fat replacement in baked goods and recipes. For infants, avocado makes an ideal first food thanks to its soft texture, neutral taste and rich nutrient profile.

- **Green Leafy Vegetables (folate, iron, vitamin A, lutein):** Dark green leafy vegetables make the perfect side dish or salad for mom. Puréed leafy greens can be offered to your child as an introduction to a diet varied in vegetables.

- **Beans and Legumes (protein, iron, fiber):** Beans and legumes are a plant-based protein appropriate for both mom and baby. Thanks to their neutral taste and soft texture, beans can easily be mashed and spoon-fed to your little one once they are ready to transition to solids.

- **Eggs (lutein, protein):** Egg yolk provides lutein and zeaxanthin, nutrients that play a key role in eye health, while the whites are a high-quality protein. While food allergies are of increasing concern to new parents, limited evidence suggests there is no benefit to delaying the introduction of eggs to your child and discusses a potential benefit to including them during the first year of life (around six months).¹⁹

- **Sweet Potatoes (fiber, vitamin A, potassium):** Sweet potatoes are a nutritious addition to the diet of both mom and baby. Enjoy them roasted, baked, sautéed or mashed.

- **Bananas (potassium, fiber):** Bananas are a terrific grab-and-go option for the busy new mom. For baby, the soft texture makes for easy mashing to be enjoyed alone or mixed together with other soft foods.

- **Almonds, Peanuts, Walnuts (naturally good fats):** Mom can enjoy as a snack or mixed into salads, trail mix or smoothies. For baby, powdered nut butters and flours can be incorporated into soft foods to enhance flavor and nutrient profile as early as six months of age. Nut butters should be reserved for older children to prevent choking, or they can be thinned by adding a few teaspoons of warm water to make a warm purée.

*Parents of food-allergic children or expectant mothers with a family history of food allergy should consult with a pediatrician or allergist before initiating any dietary changes.*
THREE E’s FOR PATIENT CONSULTATION

ENJOY:

EASY-TO-FOLLOW MASH UPS FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS

• Avocado, Squash and Pear Baby and Toddler Mash Up: Avocado combined with squash and pear provides new flavors and nutrients that make for a perfect start to your child’s culinary adventures.

• Sweet Potato and Avocado Baby Food Mash Up: A quick mash up of two of baby’s favorites, avocado and sweet potato.

• Avocado, White Bean and Spinach Baby and Toddler Food: This yummy first food blend will provide nutrients and help expand your child’s taste buds.

QUICK AND NOURISHING RECIPES FOR MOM

• Heart-Healthy Avocado and Mango Kick-Start Smoothie: After baby arrives, you may find it hard to stop for a meal. With this quick and simple smoothie, you won’t have to compromise good nutrition, no matter how busy life gets.

• Heart-Healthy Chocolate Avocado Energy Bars: Afternoon chocolate craving? With 5 grams of fiber and naturally good fats, these no-bake bars deliver on-the-go energy to help keep you fueled and satisfied.

• Heart-Healthy Avocado Banana Pancake Stacks: If you struggle with morning sickness, this neutral-flavored breakfast option may be the perfect fit. This delicious recipe can also make the perfect finger food for growing toddlers.

• Sweet Potato Fries with Guacamole: Dip into flavor with these savory sweet potato fries and guacamole dipping sauce, an excellent source of vitamin A.

1. 2017 IFIC Food and Health Survey.
RESOURCES

RECIPE INSPIRATION
Cook up something delicious at LoveOneToday.com/recipes.

NUTRITION INSPIRATION
Download and print free educational handouts for you and your clients at LoveOneToday.com/nutrition.

NUTRITION MATERIALS
Download and print free educational handouts for you and your clients at LoveOneToday.com/HPResources.

NUTRITION ARTICLES
Get helpful tips from our Avocado Goodness Experts at LoveOneToday.com/HPArticles.

The Role of Avocados in Maternal Diets during the Periconceptional Period, Pregnancy and Lactation

Avocados are a nutrient-dense fruit that contain many of the critical nutrients for fetal and infant development. Per serving (50g), avocados provide:

- 4 mg vitamin C (4% of the DV)
- 250 mg of potassium (6% of the DV)
- 5 g of monounsaturated (MUFA)
- 5 g of polyunsaturated (PUFA) fat
- A good source of fiber (11% of the DV)
- 5 g of folate (67% of the DV)
- 101 mcg of vitamin K (81% of the DV)
- 41 mcg of vitamin A (1% of the DV)
- 18 mcg of vitamin E (1% of the DV)
- 0.8 mg of zinc (4% of the DV)

Avocados are a unique nutrient-dense plant-based food that is comprised of emerging and conclusive research, examined evidence for key nutrients and their food sources on potential early- and later-life health benefits, and explored the effects of consuming avocados, a unique, nutrient-dense and plant-based maternal nutrition plays a crucial role in influencing (HAB) and published in Nutrients i, reports that the avocado, with its smooth and concentrated flavor profile, is an apple or banana. The role of avocados in maternal diets during the periconceptional period, pregnancy and lactation (HAB) and published in Nutrients i, reports that

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How to store fresh avocados
Avocado 101
How to pick, store and prepare fresh avocados.

Unripe, firm or green fruit – In order to speed up the ripening process, place avocados at room temperature. To cut avocados, remove the pit and cut the avocado in half. The flesh should be smooth, creamy and without seed. If the avocado feels mushy, it may be overripe.

Firm breaking ripe – Place the avocado in the refrigerator in an air-tight container, or plastic wrap. To store avocados uncut in the refrigerator, place them in a plastic bag or direct them on the surface and browning. Place guacamole in the refrigerator in an air-tight container, or plastic wrap. To store guacamole in the refrigerator, place them in a plastic bag or direct them on the surface and browning. Place guacamole in the refrigerator in an air-tight container, or plastic wrap. To store guacamole in the refrigerator, place them in a plastic bag or direct them on the surface and browning. Place guacamole in the refrigerator in an air-tight container, or plastic wrap. To store guacamole in the refrigerator, place them in a plastic bag or direct them on the surface and browning. Place guacamole in the refrigerator in an air-tight container, or plastic wrap. To store guacamole in the refrigerator, place them in a plastic bag or direct them on the surface and browning. Place guacamole in the refrigerator in an air-tight container, or plastic wrap. To store guacamole in the refrigerator, place them in a plastic bag or direct them on the surface and browning. Place guacamole in the refrigerator in an air-tight container, or plastic wrap. To store guacamole in the refrigerator, place them in a plastic bag or direct them on the surface and browning. Place guacamole in the refrigerator in an air-tight container, or plastic wrap. To store guacamole in the refrigerator, place them in a plastic bag or direct them on the surface and browning.
EXPERT TOOLBOX: ASSESSING PATIENT KNOWLEDGE

IT’S IMPORTANT TO ASSESS YOUR PATIENT’S CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF HEALTHY EATING SO YOU CAN CUSTOMIZE YOUR RECOMMENDATIONS. USE THE QUESTIONS BELOW TO BEGIN THE CONVERSATION.

During Pregnancy and Lactation

What comes to mind when you think about healthy eating during (pregnancy, lactation)?

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Tell me about your current diet. Are you trying to increase or decrease your consumption of any specific types of foods during (pregnancy, lactation)? If so, why have you decided to make these dietary changes?

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Do you know which nutrient needs increase during (pregnancy, lactation)? Can you name food sources that contain each of these nutrients? Do you know how to incorporate these foods and nutrients into your diet?

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

For Infants and Toddlers

What comes to mind when you think about healthy foods to feed your child?

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___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Do you know which foods are most important during infancy and first 24 months of life? Do you know why they are important? Do you know how to incorporate these foods into your child’s diet?

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

Tell me about your child’s current eating behaviors. Do you have questions or concerns about introducing certain foods to your child?

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________________________
EXPERT TOOLBOX: NUTRIENT NEEDS

HELP EMPOWER YOUR PATIENTS TO MAKE HEALTHIER CHOICES FOR MOM AND BABY. USE THE QUESTIONS BELOW TO BEGIN THE CONVERSATION.

During Pregnancy and Lactation

Ask your patient: “Did you know that your food choices during (pregnancy, lactation) can influence your child’s future food preferences, as well as the quality and quantity of breast milk?”

☐ Yes
☐ No

Educate your patient: “During (pregnancy, the first 24 months after birth), it’s important to maintain a healthy, balanced diet that will nourish both you and your child. Adding plant-based sources of dietary fat, like fresh avocados, may aid in important nutrient absorption (vitamins A, D, E, K) while also providing good nutrition (lutein, folate) for the healthy growth and development of your child.”

Empower your patient: “As a new or expecting mom, healthy eating can be a challenge. Look for foods that can help you achieve your health goals simply and boost nutrition in a way that you enjoy. Salads, soups and smoothies are all easy ways you can incorporate a variety of nutrients for both you and your little one.”

For Infants and Toddlers

Ask your patient: “How are you feeling about transitioning your baby to solid foods?”

Educate your patient: “It is important to provide a variety of soft textures—such as creamy, tender, puréed, mashed, or ground—in order to prevent choking and properly develop swallowing abilities.”

Empower your patient: “Fresh fruits and vegetables, like fresh avocado, that have a naturally soft texture and neutral flavor are an ideal first food for baby.”

NOTES

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