

## Reducing your risk of Pre-eclampsia

Preeclampsia is a relatively common medical complication of pregnancy, affecting around 2-8% of pregnancies. Symptoms include raised blood pressure, protein in the urine, oedema (swelling), headaches and vision problems. It can have serious implications for both mother and baby, but there is a lot you can do to reduce your risk of developing preeclampsia.

- Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables – ideally organic is possible. Research has shown high fruit and vegetable intake decreases the risk, and a separate study showed that organic vegetables were associated with a reduced risk.
- Eat plenty of fibre, aim for at least 25g a day. If you aren't used to eating a lot of fibre build up gradually, and include both soluble and insoluble fibre.
- Include probiotic food in your diet – one study showed that milk-based probiotics reduced the risk. Try kefir, or natural live full-fat yoghurt.
- Include omega 3 fats in your diet – from oily fish, hemp seeds, flax seeds, chia seeds and walnuts.
- Avoid added sugar – high sugar content food and drinks are associated with an increased risk of preeclampsia. Natural sugars in fruits are fine, and may reduce the risk.
- Avoid trans-fats – found in processed foods, fried foods, margarine, cakes and biscuits.

In addition to taking care with your diet, exercise during pregnancy reduces the risk of preeclampsia. Walking is easy and safe, but other exercise is also possible, check with your midwife and talk to local fitness instructors to see what is on offer. Yoga is a good option, but make sure the instructor knows that you are pregnant.

There are many good supplements for pregnant women, but it is best to talk to a nutritional therapist to establish what is best for you. One of the key vitamins that you may want to consider supplementing is vitamin D. Having low vitamin D levels makes you 4 times more likely to develop preeclampsia than women with optimal levels. Talk to your therapist or get a vitamin D test done through a company such as Better You ([www.betteryou.com](http://www.betteryou.com)).