

# The ideal weight makes for a healthier pregnancy

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(HealthDay)—If you're overweight and thinking of starting a family,

there's compelling evidence that you should lose the excess pounds before you get pregnant.

For starters, some [health conditions](#) associated with being overweight, like [polycystic ovary syndrome](#) (or PCOS), can make it harder for you to conceive.

Once you get pregnant, being overweight increases your risk for [high blood pressure](#) and diabetes ([gestational diabetes](#)), as well as the risk for miscarriage, [preterm birth](#) and even some birth defects. You may also have a higher risk of complications during labor.

Just as it's now recommended to start taking supplemental nutrients such as folic acid before getting pregnant, talk to your primary care doctor or your ob-gyn about steps you can take to lose weight. Those steps can include improving your diet and getting more exercise as part of a multi-prong way to shed pounds well before you try to conceive. Also work with your healthcare provider to get any medical conditions, such as high blood pressure, under good control.

Know that your starting weight is now used to determine what you should gain during pregnancy. The guideline for an average weight gain during pregnancy is 25 to 35 pounds if you're at normal weight.

But if you're overweight, with a body mass index between 25 and 29.9, you should gain only 15 to 25 pounds. And if you're obese, with a [body mass index](#) of 30 or higher, the recommendation is for a pregnancy weight gain of between 11 to 20 pounds.

It's very hard to get through pregnancy without gaining more weight than you planned. But if you can start out close to your ideal weight, you'll have fewer pounds to lose to regain your shape after baby comes.

**More information:** The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists has detailed information on [obesity and pregnancy](#).

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