

Satiate those pregnancy cravings

Now more than ever, you have to pay extra attention to what you eat. Every expecting woman wants to satiate those cravings, but more importantly, ensure she's eating a nutritious and wholesome meal. This is the only way to give your baby the best possible start. But how do you resist those junk food cravings that are hard to stave off? M&B gives you a low-down on nutritional food items to include in your diet, and healthy alternatives for a perfect substitution

BY SANIA DHIRWANI



Pregnancy cravings can sometimes be overwhelming. You tend to end up with

a hankering for food that you've not had in a very long time, or worse, that you're not supposed to include in a pregnancy diet. Should you resist the urge or give in to temptation? Well, in the world where everything can be substituted with a healthy alternative, you need not fret. You can have a safe and healthy pregnancy without feeling the need to give up on your favourite foods.

Role of nutrition

We've often heard the phrase, 'You are what you eat'. It stands true even when you are pregnant. What an expectant mother eats will lay the foundation for the long-term health and well-being of her unborn child. Reiterating this notion, Shweta Mandal, dietician, Columbia Asia Hospital, Ghaziabad, says, "A well-balanced diet is essential during pregnancy, since the mother's diet has to meet the needs of a growing foetus. The first few weeks of pregnancy are crucial, as most of the physical and mental growth of the baby

takes place around this time. The principal organs – external, internal and the nervous system of the baby – are formed during this time."

Studies indicate that a good maternal nutrition plays a major role in reducing complications during pregnancy and delivery. Akshay Pai, founder and CEO, Nutrova, says, "As the pregnancy progresses, the nutritional demands of an expecting mother increases significantly in terms of energy, macronutrients (protein) and micronutrients (folic acid). For instance, consuming folic acid and iron can reduce the risk of birth defects, while the omega-3 fatty acid has been correlated to improve visual and cognitive function in infants and children up to the age four." In addition, common complications experienced such as morning sickness, constipation, leg cramps, fatigue, etc., can be combated with a well-balanced diet.

Eating habits

In pregnancy, focus more on increasing the quality than the



quantity. Kejaj Sheth, founder, Nutrivity, opines, "Buy only fresh and organic foods. Replace full-fat dairy products with low-fat alternatives like low-fat milk, curd, paneer, tofu, soy milk, almond milk or skim milk powder. Moderation is key. You can enjoy a variety of foods, but preferably choose foods which are low in calories and high in nutrition. Consume at least two to three litres of water daily."

Further elaborating on the importance of protein and other nutrients, Shweta says, "During pregnancy, a woman's body requires just an additional 300 or more calories per day, to meet the need for protein (78gm per day), calcium (1200mg per

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day), fat (30gm per day), iron (35 gm per day), vitamin D, folic acid, zinc and vitamin B12." It is essential to eat small and frequent meals every two to three hours. Munmum Ganeriwal, nutritionist and fitness consultant, and founder of Yuktahaar, advises, "Avoid over eating, especially when eating outside as it may cause gastrointestinal distress, acidity and nausea. Have a wholesome evening snack that will keep away the hunger pangs and will let you eat light for dinner before bedtime. Eat dinner two hours prior going to bed."

Combating aversions

The most common aversions are towards foods with a strong smell.

CONSUME

- Cereals – brown rice, *poha*, *dal*, oats, multigrain bread and more
- Dairy products – milk, cheese, paneer, yogurt, buttermilk
- Protein – meat, poultry, fish, egg, legumes, nuts
- All seasonal fruit and vegetables

AVOID

- Packaged juices, colas and sodas
- Packaged foods – contains MSG, added flavours, added emulsifiers, added colours
- Red meat
- Excessive caffeine
- Raw sprouts
- Papaya (unripe) and pineapple
- Uncooked eggs
- Alcohol
- Smoking

These include garlic, anything spicy, chicken, meat, milk, tea, coffee, and more. During pregnancy, you may experience a change in flavour, and it can so happen that you may hate the food you used to love before pregnancy and love the foods you once hated. Aversions mostly tend to occur during the first trimester, but can set in at any point during your pregnancy. Munmun says, "For aversions, it is best to not force yourself to eat the food, simply because it's healthy. For example, if the thought of eating eggs makes you sick, make sure you try consuming an alternative source of protein, like dairy, for example." It is imperative to listen to your body. Understand what your body needs and how you can satisfy your cravings.

Shweta has the following tips to deal with aversions:

- ◆ Avoid gassy foods
- ◆ Avoid rich or spicy foods
- ◆ Consume sugary biscuits early morning
- ◆ Use ginger in any form
- ◆ Take vitamins as advised

Foods to eat and avoid

Apart from ensuring that adequate nutrients are being consumed, the way in which these foods are consumed is also important. For vegetarians, Akshay suggests, "Foods that support a healthy pregnancy include whole grains (a healthy source of carbohydrates used for energy), green leafy vegetables (a great source of folic acid and iron), pulses (a source of protein and fibre for vegetarians), dairy (rich in calcium and protein), fruit (loaded with vitamins and antioxidants) and nuts (a healthy source of essential fats)." And for non-vegetarians, moderate amounts of eggs, meat and fish are all great sources of protein, fats and other micronutrients.

However, certain foods can contain contaminants that can be harmful for both the expecting mother and the developing foetus. "Raw meats are a potential source of parasites. Similarly, raw eggs are best avoided. This extends to products such as mayonnaise and hollandaise sauce, which may not always be made from pasteurised eggs. While consuming seafood, it is important to avoid raw shellfish as it can cause infection, and altogether limit or avoid the consumption of fish such as tuna, swordfish, shark and king mackerel, as these can potentially contain high levels of mercury," advises Akshay.

Healthy substitutions

Choose healthier food options

to satisfy those cravings. Munmun says, "For sugar cravings, opt for homemade mithais like laddoos, halwa, kheer, til gur and more. For snacks, replace chips with puffed rice. Replace colas with *kokum sherbets* and sugarcane juice." Choose foods which are healthy but also tasty. Kejaj adds, "Consume fruit-infused water over aerated drinks, milkshakes over ice creams. If you crave chocolate, replace milk chocolates with dark chocolates and choose mixed nuts over trail mix." MB

Healthy Recipes for your Pregnancy Cravings

Coconut Laddoos



You need:

- 2 cups fresh coconut grated
- ½ cup cow milk
- ¼ cup jaggery
- 1 to 2 tsp ghee
- A handful of cashews
- A pinch of cardamom powder

You must:

1. Heat ghee in a pan and roast cashews till golden. Keep it aside.
2. In the same pan, add coconut, milk and jaggery. Let the moisture evaporate and till the mixture is thickened.
3. Let it cool down. Roll into small laddoos.