

Nutrients to Look for in Your Prenatal Supplement

Prenatal supplements contain widely varying nutrient levels that may or may not be consistent with recommended intakes for pregnancy.¹

Here are some of the most important nutrients to look for in your prenatal supplement:

NUTRIENT	AMOUNT	DETAILS
Folic Acid	400 mcg	-the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG) recommends that all pregnant women take 400 mcg of folic acid three months prior to conception and during the first trimester ²
Iron	22-27 mg	-22 mg is the daily estimated average requirement for pregnancy, and 27 mg meets the needs of 97% of pregnant women ³ -women who have high dietary intakes of iron (from red meat, beans, lentils) may require less than this amount
Vitamin D	600 mg	-the ACOG recommends that all pregnant women should consume 600 IU of Vitamin D per day ⁴

Other nutrients that may necessitate additional supplementation include:

NUTRIENT	BASELINE INTAKE LEVELS PRIOR TO PREGNANCY	AMOUNT	DETAILS
Omega-3 Fatty Acids (DHA&EPA)⁵ NOTE: DHA= docosahexaenoic acid and EPA= eicosapentaenoic acid are two different types of omega-3 fatty acids	Women with adequate intakes = greater than one serving of fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, herring, sardines & anchovies) per week	200 mg of DHA	-200 mg of DHA can be found in some prenatal supplements
	Women with low intakes = less than one serving of fatty fish per week NOTE: 95% of North American women have low intakes of omega-3 fatty acids ^{6,7}	600-1000 mg of DHA+EPA	-this amount is rarely found in prenatal supplements; an additional supplement will likely be needed to meet this recommendation
Choline	~200 mcg	-the ACOG recommends that pregnant women consume 450 mg of choline per day; ² average choline intakes are approximately 290 mg per day ⁸ -there is insufficient evidence to recommend a specific dose of supplemental choline for pregnancy, however, women could safely consume an additional ~200 mg of supplemental choline to reach recommended intake levels and would stay safely below the upper tolerable intake level of 3500 mg	

The requirement for 14 nutrients increases during pregnancy, including: Vitamin A, Vitamin B1, Vitamin B2, Vitamin B3, Vitamin B6, Vitamin B12, Vitamin C, Zinc, Copper, Iodine, as well as the nutrients mentioned above.

Many of these nutritional needs can be obtained from one's diet. Therefore, in addition to taking a prenatal supplement, healthy dietary choices are essential to obtain the recommended nutrient intakes for pregnancy.

REFERENCES: 1-Cai, Am J Perinatology, 2024; 2-ACOG 2021; 3-IOM, Dietary Reference Intakes; 4-IOM, Dietary Reference Intakes; 5-Cetin, Am J of Obs & Gyne MFM, 2024; 6-Zhang, Nutrients, 2018; 7-Denomme, J of Nutr, 2015; 8-USDA, NHANES 2017-2020.