

# 7 WAYS TO BE YOUR OWN diet doctor

Beat tiredness, nix nausea and boost your memory with our one-stop food solutions

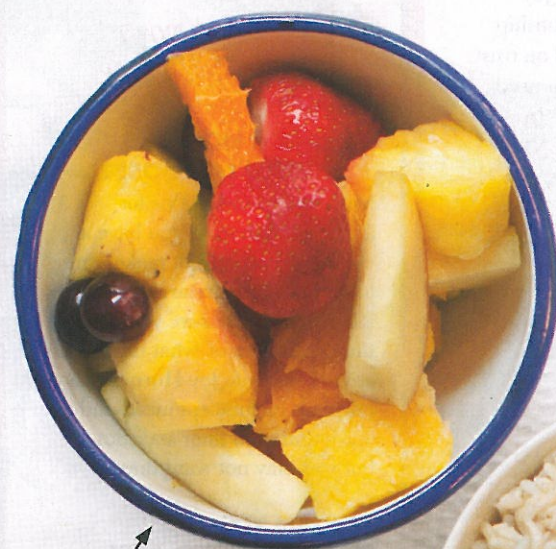
**R**andom smiles from strangers, always getting a seat on the bus, jumping to the front of the toilet queue... Pregnancy has some amazing side effects. Unfortunately, though, not all are so welcome. 'Hormonal fluctuations, plus the extra weight of your growing baby, can bring about some physical challenges,' says midwife Vicki Scott. 'Fortunately, adjusting your diet can help with many common issues.' Here's how to eat smart for the next nine months.

## 1 MUNCH AWAY MORNING SICKNESS

Nausea tends to strike when blood-sugar levels drop, so eating little and often can help. 'Aim to eat protein-rich meals,' says nutritionist Sarah Walford. 'This will help slow your digestion for a more sustained release of sugar into your bloodstream.' Scrambled eggs or porridge sprinkled with mixed nuts and seeds are a great way to start the day, while oatcakes spread with nut butter or vegetable sticks dipped in houmous make perfect snacks. Ginger can help, too. 'It's renowned for relieving nausea,' says Vicki. 'Try drinking ginger tea, or grate it and add to smoothies.'

## 2 HELP EASE HEARTBURN

Heartburn is common during pregnancy, thanks to increased levels of the hormones progesterone and relaxin. 'These help loosen your ligaments ready for birth. Unfortunately, they also relax the sphincter at the top of your stomach,' says Vicki. 'This can allow the acidic contents



Stay hydrated with fresh fruit

Brown rice ups your fibre intake



Ward off nausea with veg sticks



Mackerel will give you a brain-boost

to flow back up.' The key is to change the timing of when you eat and your portion sizes. 'Eating five to seven small meals, rather than three large ones, will help prevent your stomach from becoming too full,' says Louisa Popplewell, head of nutrition at Nuffield Health. 'Eat your biggest meal at lunchtime and have lighter ones in the evening. Avoiding heartburn triggers, such as citrus fruit and spicy, fatty and fried foods, will also help.'

## 3 BEAT THAT BUNGED-UP FEELING

Sluggish bowels are another side effect of pregnancy hormones. 'The most important thing you can do to prevent constipation is to drink plenty of water,' says

Vicki. 'Aim for around two litres a day.' And avoid eating too much fibre without upping your fluid intake. 'Fibre acts like a sponge, so it can actually dehydrate the body, leaving you even more blocked up,' says Sarah. 'Rather than eating lots of bran, opt for plenty of fresh, raw or lightly cooked vegetables and fruit, as well as brown rice, wholewheat pasta, bulgur wheat and oats. A sprinkle of flaxseed on your porridge will help get things moving, too.'

## 4 REDUCE RESTLESSNESS

Getting enough sleep definitely becomes a challenge as your bump grows. Fortunately, there are a number of foods that can help you stop counting sheep at night. 'Foods rich in the amino acid tryptophan can boost serotonin levels, which, in turn, helps regulate sleep,' says Sarah. 'Bananas, beans, lean beef, buckwheat, chickpeas, cottage cheese, fish, flaxseeds, sunflower seeds and turkey are all great sources.' A warm milky drink or a cup of camomile tea before bed can also help relax your body and help you snooze. Another secret weapon is Marmite. 'Yeast extract is a rich source of B vitamins, important in regulating sleep,' says Louisa. 'Spread Marmite on wholemeal toast for a slumber-inducing supper.'

## 5 UP YOUR ENERGY

Supporting a growing baby can be tiring, which is why you'll probably find yourself craving sweet or stodgy foods in the coming months. But don't be fooled by their quick energy fix. 'Refined carbohydrates, such as biscuits and cakes, will make you feel more drained in the long run,' says Sarah. 'You need to balance your blood-sugar levels instead, which you can do by eating plenty of protein- and fibre-rich foods. A simple rule is to

make sure that every meal and snack has both wholegrain and protein elements in it.' Iron is also vital for energy. You'll find it in lean red meat, wholegrain foods and leafy green veg, such as spinach. Another good source is beetroot. 'Add it to salads or juice it for a delicious boost,' says nutritionist Yvonne Bishop-Weston.

## 6 FIGHT FORGETFULNESS

Lost your keys? 'Lots of women find they become more forgetful during pregnancy, as hormonal changes plus a lack of sleep can take their toll on your memory,' says Vicki. The solution? Get a dose of seafood. 'Oily fish are rich in omega-3 essential fatty acids that can help boost your brainpower,' says Sarah. 'Salmon, mackerel, anchovies, sardines and herrings are all great sources, but stick to two portions a week in pregnancy.' You can also find it in olive oil, pumpkin seeds, flaxseeds and walnuts. 'Wholegrains are important for good recall, too, as they contain lots of B vitamins, which are vital to brain function,' adds Sarah. So don't forget to add brown rice, wholewheat pasta, rye bread and barley to your shopping list.

## 7 BANISH BLOATING

Puffy ankles and swollen hands are typical in pregnancy, as hormones can encourage water retention. 'It sounds counter-intuitive, but drinking more fluids will actually help,' says Vicki. 'The less water you drink, the more your body holds onto it.' Making a few dietary changes can help, too. 'Try to cut back on salty foods, such as crisps and ready meals, as these are high in sodium, which further encourages water retention,' says Sarah. 'Instead, eat lots of potassium-rich foods, such as apricots, avocados, bananas, citrus fruits, nuts – particularly almonds, cashews and pecans – parsley, sunflower seeds and vegetables, which can help to restore your sodium balance.' **PHB**

**Your perfect pregnancy meal planner** Get the best out of your day with this tasty tailor-made menu

### WHEN YOU WAKE

A glass of warm water with lemon and freshly grated ginger. This will rehydrate you and help banish nausea.

### BREAKFAST

Poached eggs on rye

toast with spinach, for a protein and iron boost. A cup of mineral-rich rooibos tea.

### 11AM SNACK

A handful of nuts and dried fruit. A cup of peppermint tea.

### LUNCH

Cannellini bean and root vegetable soup, for a fibre and protein punch. Yoghurt with fresh berries, oat granola and seeds to aid digestion.

### 3PM SNACK

Oatcakes topped with houmous. Fresh fruit.

### DINNER

Grilled salmon with steamed vegetables and quinoa. These will provide protein,

fibre and energy.

Home-made sugar-free wholewheat banana bread for a sweet fix.

### BEDTIME

A cup of soothing camomile tea to help you wind down.