

WATERMELON AND PREGNANCY

By Barbara Levine, Ph.D., R.D.

Watermelon: Part of a Healthy Pregnancy Diet

According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, pregnant women should eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole-grain or enriched bread and cereal, milk and milk products, meat, poultry, fish, eggs, nuts, dried beans and peas. Eating a generous assortment of these foods will benefit you as well as your unborn baby (consult your physician for specific dietary recommendations). Pregnancy places many nutritional demands on a woman's body, and eating nutrient rich foods not only helps to meet the needs of a rapidly growing baby, but also to keep mom healthy during pregnancy and after. It is also an ideal time to enhance an already good diet, as it is also a perfect time for junk food junkies to adopt lifelong healthful dietary changes.

Watermelon: Rich in Vitamin C

Watermelon is an excellent source of vitamin C, which aids in the maintenance of normal connective tissue, and promotes wound healing and helps the body's immune system function. Vitamin C also assists in the body's utilization of iron...iron needs are particularly high during pregnancy because a woman's body requires more iron than usual to produce all the blood needed to supply nutrition to the placenta. Iron is more easily absorbed when consumed with a good source of vitamin C, which is abundant in watermelon.

Smart Snacking for Two

Make each food count by selecting nutrient rich snacks such as watermelon, raisins, nuts, carrots, and other healthful edibles that help to nourish you and your unborn baby. Replace candy bars that offer fat and empty calories for something that will contribute life-building nutrients. Get into the habit of adding fruit to your cereal and

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yogurt. Always keep healthful snacks in the house. Freeze watermelon cubes or chunks to use as ice cubes in beverages. Adding a nutrient rich food like watermelon to your fare will not only help to provide essential nutrients to you and your unborn baby, but you'll also indulge cravings for something sweet and refreshing and satisfying.

Wash Fruit and Vegetables

The Food and Drug Administration urges everyone to wash all fruits and vegetables including all melons in clean, running water before eating, and remove surface dirt with a scrub brush. Make sure to also use clean knives and cutting surfaces to avoid contamination when handling and preparing food, and this is especially important for pregnant women. Contamination on the outside of rind fruits (like watermelon, cantaloupe, and honeydew melon) can be transferred to the inside of cut fruit by the cutting knife. Additionally, when preparing melons, fruits, vegetables or other foodstuffs, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water prior to preparing the food for eating.

Barbara Levine, R.D., Ph.D., is the nutritional expert for the National Watermelon Promotion Board. Dr. Levine has been a researcher, consultant and teacher of nutrition at some of the most prestigious medical institutions in the country. She also is the Co-Director of the Human Nutrition Program at The Rockefeller University, and the Director of the Nutrition Information Center at Weill Medical College of Cornell University-New York Presbyterian Hospital.

The National Watermelon Promotion Board, based in Orlando, FL represents 2,500 growers, shippers and importers. Through research, communication and marketing initiatives, the Board is finding new ways to enhance market opportunities for farmers and to promote the nutritional, culinary and convenience benefits of watermelon. Our goal is to support and expand existing markets, develop new markets and facilitate the production of watermelons. For additional information on watermelon, please visit our web site at www.watermelon.org. For additional information or a photograph please contact Leslie Coleman at 407-657-0261 or lcoleman@watermelon.org.

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