

**MASSACHUSETTS WIC
NUTRITION PROGRAM**

Weight Gain During Pregnancy



Why does WIC monitor weight gain during pregnancy?

- In a national data set of low-income mothers, the prevalence of women with excessive weight gain during pregnancy rose from 37.5% to 42.8%, and the prevalence of women with inadequate weight gain during pregnancy dropped from 33.1% to 25.0% over the past ten years. ¹
- Women who are underweight and/or do not gain enough weight during pregnancy are at risk for low birth weight infants, retarded fetal growth, perinatal morbidity, hemorrhaging, anemia, endometriosis, Cesarean delivery, and preterm delivery. ²
- Overweight mothers and those who gain excessive weight during pregnancy are at risk for preeclampsia, high birth weight infants, postpartum weight retention and gestational diabetes. ³
- Prepregnant overweight and obesity has been linked to poor breastfeeding outcomes due to a reduction in prolactin response. ⁴
- Maternal obesity during pregnancy has been linked to childhood overweight status. In a study of families participating in the WIC program, children whose mothers were obese during early pregnancy were 2.5 times more likely to be overweight during their preschool years. ⁵ A 2008 study determined that children of mothers who gained excessive weight during pregnancy were 48% more likely to be overweight at 7 years of age than children of mothers who met the weight gain guidelines. ⁶



How does WIC monitor weight gain during pregnancy?

- A weight is collected at the initial WIC appointment and at least one additional weight is collected at a subsequent appointment prior to delivery. WIC's policy is to discuss weight gain status with mothers during their WIC visits. If staff assess that weight gain is excessive or inadequate, they will work with the mother, and her health care provider if needed, to achieve a healthier weight gain pattern.
- WIC's recommendations are based on the Institute of Medicine (IOM)'s 2009 report *Weight Gain During Pregnancy: Reexamining the Guidelines*.⁷ Consistent with these guidelines, WIC nutrition staff use the table below to assess and monitor prenatal weight gain:

Pre-pregnancy BMI category	BMI	Total Weight Gain Range (lbs) for Singleton Pregnancies	Total Weight Gain Range (lbs) for Multiples
Underweight	<18.5	28-40	----
Normal Weight	18.5-24.9	25-35	37-54
Overweight	25.0-29.9	15-25	31-50
Obese	≥30	11-20	25-42

How does WIC encourage healthy weight gain during pregnancy?

- Staff provide nutrition education targeted to individual needs during pregnancy.
- Staff encourage physical activity, with approval of the medical provider.
- WIC Programs offer breastfeeding education and support services which contribute to a healthy weight for both mother and baby.

How can WIC and medical providers work together for a healthy weight gain during pregnancy?

- Encourage women to discuss their diet and physical activity before, during, and after pregnancy to help achieve the recommended weight gain ranges.
- Promote healthy eating, physical activity and greater breastfeeding duration.
- Utilize evidence-based weight gain guidelines and share them with patients.
- Discuss the importance of healthy weight gain throughout pregnancy.
- Facilitate communication between medical providers and WIC nutrition staff when a woman's weight gain pattern needs to be monitored closely.

¹ *Pregnancy Surveillance 2007 Report*. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Web. 11 Feb. 2011 | http://www.cdc.gov/pednss/pdfs/PNSS_2007.pdf

² Prentice A, Goldberg G. Maternal obesity increases congenital malformations. *Nutr Rev*. 1996; 54: 146-150.

³ Cnattingius S, et al. Prepregnancy weight and the risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes. *N Eng J Med*. 1998; 338: 147-152.

⁴ Rasmussen, Kathleen M., and Chris L. Kjolhede. "Prepregnant Overweight and Obesity Diminish the Prolactin Response to Suckling in the First Week Postpartum." *Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics* 113.5 (2004): e465-e471.

⁵ Whitaker R. Predicting preschooler obesity at birth: The role of maternal obesity in early pregnancy. *Pediatrics*. 2004; 114(1): 29-36.

⁶ Wrotniak BH et al. Gestational weight gain and risk of overweight in the offspring at age 7 y in a multicenter, multiethnic cohort study. *Am J Clin Nutr*. 2008; 87⁶: 1818-1824.

⁷ Institute of Medicine, Committee to Reexamine IOM Pregnancy Weight Guidelines. *Weight Gain During Pregnancy*, Washington, D.C., National Academy Press, 2009.