

Importance of Achieving a Healthy Weight in Preconception

Maintaining a healthy weight before conception is an important step in preparing for a healthy pregnancy. With obesity rates rising globally, aiming for a weight within the recommended range before becoming pregnant may help improve fertility and reduce the risk of complications for both pregnant person and baby.

Understanding Body Mass Index (BMI)

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a commonly used tool to assess weight in relation to height and estimate associated health risks. The table below, based on the **Canadian Guidelines for Body Weight Classification in Adults**, outlines BMI categories and related health risk levels.

Optimizing Weight Gain During Pregnancy

Classification	BMI Category (kg/m ²)	Risk of developing health problems
Underweight	<18.5	Increased
Normal Weight	18.5-24.9	Least
Overweight	25.0-29.9	Increased
Obese		
Class I	30.0-34.9	High
Class II	35.0-39.9	Very high
Class III	≥40.0	Extremely high

Managing weight gain during pregnancy is important for reducing the risk of complications. Both excessive and inadequate weight gain can impact pregnancy outcomes:

- **Excessive Weight Gain** may increase the risk of:
 - Gestational hypertension
 - Preeclampsia
 - Gestational diabetes
 - Large babies
 - Caesarean delivery
 - Postpartum weight retention
- **Inadequate Weight Gain** may increase the risk of:
 - Fetal growth restriction

Following guidelines for weight gain based on pre-pregnancy BMI can support a healthier pregnancy.

Pregnancy Weight Gain based on BMI (Body Mass Index)

Classification	BMI category (kg/m ²)	Suggested weight gain (kg)	Suggested weight gain (lb)
Underweight	<18.5	12.5 to 18	27.5 to 40
Normal weight	18.5 to 24.9	11.5 to 16	25 to 35
Overweight	25.0 to 29.9	7 to 11.5	15 to 25
Obese Class I	30.0 to 34.9	7	15
Obese Class II	35.0 to 39.9	7	15
Obese Class III	≥40.0	7	15

Obesity Management in Pregnancy at NBRHC

- If you are receiving Midwifery care and have a **pre-pregnancy Body Mass Index (BMI) of 40 or higher**, it is recommended that you have an early consultation with an Obstetrician to support safe pregnancy management.
- People with a **pre-pregnancy BMI of 50 or higher** are strongly encouraged to attend a consultation with the **Special Pregnancy Unit at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto**. Due to the increased risks associated with severe obesity (Obese class III) during labour and delivery, planning for delivery at Mount Sinai may be recommended.
- Pregnant people with a **BMI of 55 or higher at 36 weeks gestation** will be advised to deliver at **Mount Sinai Hospital**, where specialized equipment and resources are available to ensure safe and appropriate care.

Please speak with your pregnancy care provider if you would like more information.

Adapted from:

SOGC guideline No. 391- Pregnancy and Maternal Obesity Part 1: Pre-conception and prenatal care (2019)

SOGC guideline No. 239- Obesity in Pregnancy (February 2010)

Association of Ontario Midwives. The management of high or low body mass index during pregnancy update (2019)

Canadian guidelines for body weight classification in adults. Government of Canada (2003)