



COMMODITIES TO SUPPORT NUTRITION CARE FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

BACKGROUND

The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and the newly released UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030, emphasize the prevention of all forms of malnutrition in women, especially during the nutritionally vulnerable periods of pregnancy and breastfeeding. Securing adequate nutrition during pregnancy and breastfeeding is essential for the health and well-being of both mother and child. Ensuring adequate maternal nutrition is a prerequisite for advancing global progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and the World Health Assembly targets on anaemia, low birthweight (LBW), stunting, and wasting.

Women have increased nutritional requirements during pregnancy, which are challenging to meet through diet alone, especially in low- and middle-income countries. In these settings, the absence of adequate nutrition before and during pregnancy is an underlying cause of increased maternal morbidity, mortality, and poor birth outcomes such as LBW and small for gestational age (SGA). An estimated 20 per cent of all stunting and 30 per cent of all wasting in young children is associated with SGA births.¹ Latest estimates reveal that 154 million women are too thin, and 520 million women are anaemic.² These two conditions are closely linked to the births of 20 million LBW babies annually.³

Nutrition commodities available for pregnant women

Product	Benefits and indications	Pack/unit size	Product image
Multiple micronutrient supplement (MMS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decreases the risk of maternal anaemia, low birthweight and small for gestational age births.⁹ Provides nutritional support for pregnant women where diets routinely lack micronutrients. 	S1580102 Blister pack of 30 tablets. S1580101 Bottles of 100 S1580100 Bottle of 1000	
Balanced protein-energy (BEP) dietary supplement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduces the risk of stillbirths and small for gestational age Increases mean birthweight in neonates in undernourished women.¹⁰ 	S0000251 92-gram sachet in a carton of 150 sachets	
Calcium supplement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduces the risk of pre-eclampsia, preterm births, and maternal deaths associated with low calcium intakes.¹¹ 	S0000201 Blister pack of 100 tablets	

AVAILABLE NUTRITION COMMODITIES FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

Evidence-based solutions are available to support a healthy pregnancy, including calcium supplements, multiple micronutrient supplements (MMS), and balanced energy and protein (BEP) supplements, and are recommended for pregnant women as part of antenatal care (ANC).⁴ Using MMS in pregnancy can prevent anaemia, reduce the risk of LBW, SGA, and preterm births, and meet the additional nutrient requirements of pregnant women; and is recommended by the WHO as part of antenatal care and informed by implementation research.⁵ Where underweight prevalence in women is high (20-39%), BEP may be used to promote gestational weight gain and prevent adverse pregnancy outcomes, including stillbirths and SGA births.⁶ In settings with low calcium intakes, daily calcium supplementation can reduce the risk of pre-eclampsia, preterm births, maternal morbidity and mortality.^{7,8}

UNICEF supports the use of MMS, calcium, and BEP supplements to improve health and nutrition outcomes of pregnant women and newborns. To support these efforts, UNICEF now offers a range of nutritional commodities for use by pregnant women in different contexts, including two new products (calcium, BEP) and one new product presentation (MMS).

Nutrient values of Multiple Micronutrient Supplement

Vitamin A	800 RE	Vitamin B6	1.9 mg	Copper	2 mg
Vitamin E	10 mg	Vitamin B12	2.6 µg	Selenium	65 µg
Vitamin D	5 µg	Folic Acid	400 µg	Iodine	150 µg
Vitamin B1	1.4 mg	Vitamin C	70 mg	Copper	2 mg
Vitamin B2	1.4 mg	Iron	30 mg		
Niacin	18 mg	Zinc	15 mg		

Nutrient values of Balanced Protein-Energy supplement

Energy	515 kcal	Iron	35 mg	Vitamin C	71 mg
Proteins	14.4 g	Iodine	150 µg	Vitamin B1	1.6 mg
Lipids	36.6 g	Selenium	65 µg	Vitamin B2	1.6 mg
Calcium	111 mg	Vitamin A	881 µg	Vitamin B6	2 mg
Zinc	17 mg	Vitamin D	15 µg	Vitamin B12	2.6 µg
Copper	2.7 mg	Vitamin E	13 mg	Folic acid	461 µg
Niacin	21 mg				

Nutrient value of Calcium supplement

Calcium lactate	300 mg	Calcium	120 mg
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For more information on these commodities refer to the [UNICEF Supply Catalogue](#) or contact:

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Christian, P., et al., Risk of childhood undernutrition related to small-for-gestational age and preterm birth in low- and middle-income countries, *International Journal of Epidemiology*, vol. 42, no.5, October 2013, pp. 1340–1355.
- 2 United Nations Children’s Fund, Global databases, 2020.
- 3 United Nations Children’s Fund, Global databases, 2019.
- 4 World Health Organization, *WHO antenatal care recommendations for a positive pregnancy experience: nutritional interventions update: multiple micronutrient supplements during pregnancy*, World Health Organization, Geneva, 2020.
- 5 World Health Organization, *WHO antenatal care recommendations for a positive pregnancy experience: nutritional interventions update: multiple micronutrient supplements during pregnancy*, World Health Organization, Geneva, 2020.
- 6 World Health Organization, *WHO recommendations on antenatal care for a positive pregnancy experience*. 2016, WHO: Geneva.
- 7 World Health Organization, *WHO recommendations on antenatal care for a positive pregnancy experience*. 2016, WHO: Geneva.
- 8 World Health Organization, *WHO recommendation: Calcium supplementation during pregnancy for the prevention of pre-eclampsia and its complications*. 2018, World Health Organization: Geneva.
- 9 Keats, E.C., et al., *Multiple-micronutrient supplementation for women during pregnancy*. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, 2019(3).
- 10 Ota, E., et al., *Antenatal dietary education and supplementation to increase energy and protein intake*. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, 2015(6).
- 11 Hofmeyr GJ, Lawrie TA, Atallah AN, Torloni MR. Calcium supplementation during pregnancy for preventing hypertensive disorders and related problems. *Cochrane Database of Systemic Reviews*, 2018(10).