

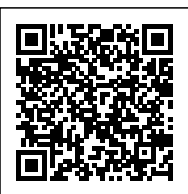
WHY WEIGHT GAIN WAS HARD FOR ME DURING PREGNANCY

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I'm being asked this question time and time again and so here's my answer.

When you predominantly eat real food like I do, gaining weight during pregnancy is not the easiest prospect. Having said that all my monthly pre-natal check ups have been an absolute pleasure.

While at home and in the elevator, well meaning acquaintances say '9th month?? But you're hardly showing, are you sure *badhu fine che?*', the doctors sure thought everything was going well all along. What I want to ask is, during pregnancy, why does the mother need to become plump and round with a cute little double chin? What if without the mother becoming round, the baby could become delightfully chubby, gaining all the weight while the mother looks her supple self besides the belly? I think it's not only an ideal place to be but pretty realistic.



12 hours before baby arrived

I've been told I'm lucky. I'm not. (I have fat genes. I have been over weight most of my adult life.) It's called hard work - tons of reading, discipline, sweat, and well, **hard work pre – pregnancy**. First the facts: I weighed 65 kgs before getting pregnant. These 65 kgs packed a good amount of lean muscle mass, which explained the weight loss when I took a holiday and the weight gain when I was back to my workouts.

In my first trimester, I went down to 62.5 kgs due to the nausea, the meat aversion, and the loss of lean muscle mass. At 9 months I weighed 69.5 kgs and after the baby came I weighed 64.5 kgs (a pound or so less than before I got pregnant.) What with a 3 kg baby plus placenta, plus an over sized uterus shrinking plus the amniotic fluid being flushed out.

How? 1) **The pre-work.** Before getting pregnant I was at my fittest best. I had high levels of fitness and activity. A lot of my workouts focused on core strength, yoga, bootcamp, taekwondo, weights, all of them focused on real movement using core instead of focused body parts. A lot of pushups,

planks, headstands and sprints later, I had super tight abdominal muscles (but of course). These muscles have made it rather hard for the baby to push out. I suspect that since they have stayed in, they haven't let my appetite go astray, eating only enough to keep the nourishment going in and not feeling an urge to gobble up everything that comes my way.

Also by way of pre pregnancy prepping, was that I had been eating real food for the longest time. This has made me trust my body and my instincts when it comes to food. So when even the most accomplished doctors in the city told me to eat whole grains, I continued eating what made me feel good, and the results and my blood tests did not raise any questions at all.²⁾ **The food.** Ignoring all the well meaning dietary advice out there, I continued eating real food. Veggies and fruits, eggs, nuts, cheese, milk, dahi, dairy fats – cream, butter, ghee – and a little bit of meat here and there comprised of my pregnancy diet. Water, lots of it, and prenatal supplements too. Did I mention I eat a lot of veggies and fruits for my necessary intake of carbs.

Basically a lot of processed food and the grains in diets cause a lot of water retention which real food simply doesn't allow. Also ditching the sugar and grains pre pregnancy helped a lot as I did not have many cravings and stayed quite clean.³⁾ **The exercise.** Only high levels of activity can take away the lows or the feeling of worthlessness that pregnant women are prone to sink into.

Especially in India, where too much exercise during pregnancy is not encouraged, women feel that it's their birthright to sit in one place and feel sorry for one self. I'm here to tell you it's not ok (unless your doctor has ordered bed rest or no exercise).

My pregnancy exercise routine involved, Iyengar yoga in my regular class 2 times a week (where I did independent headstands, hand stands and shoulder stands – yes still), Prenatal Iyengar yoga 3 times a week, which involved stretching and creating space for the baby as well as standing poses to make my legs stronger, walks with my iPod 2 times a week and walks with my husband 2 – 3 times a week. That makes it nearly 10 workouts a week. If I can do it, so can you. (I'm talking to you non pregnant folk too J) Though I am not saying pushing yourself beyond your comfortable limits is wise, if you have not been very active pre pregnancy, it may be prudent to do less but nothing stops anyone from walking every single day.⁴⁾ **The attitude.** I felt I could do anything. That attitude came from having listened to my body for two years understanding the limits and figuring out what worked **FOR ME**. I never for one second felt that I could not just up and go. Having said that, I took extra good care of my self, slept a lot, ate ice cream when I felt like and did nothing to put baby or me at risk. I also went trekking during my baby moon. Yes, I really could do anything.

5) The literature. Read, read, and read some more. Being well informed has enabled me to gain the confidence to experiment with my body and myself and to understand how my body works. If you plan to conceive in two years, I would highly recommend starting to read on health, real food and fitness, and how to be like nature intended you to be, today!

The reading brought me to my adopted lifestyle, the reading helped me conceive at first attempt, and the reading has helped me stay in the best possible shape in those long 9 months and counting!

Hormones and water retention plays quite a role when it comes to pregnancy weight gain. When you eat real food (no processed food, no sugar, no grains) water retention is minimal (which explains no swelling at all for me). Many women worry a lot about the health of the foetus, their weight gain and their appearance (will I ever get my waist line back?). Stress secretes a hormone called cortisol, which is going to make weight gain even more likely. **The more aware you are, the less you will fret!**

Most primal / paleo mothers like me did not gain weight during pregnancy, which goes to show that hormones can play a role but being in tune with your body can keep cravings in check. Being in control of your body (and not letting it control you) is a rewarding experience, pregnant or not.

If you are a woman who plans to conceive in the near future, start looking after your body now. And don't thank me, thank your body.

I Would love to hear from you whether you agree, disagree or think this post is way off. Thanks for reading!

