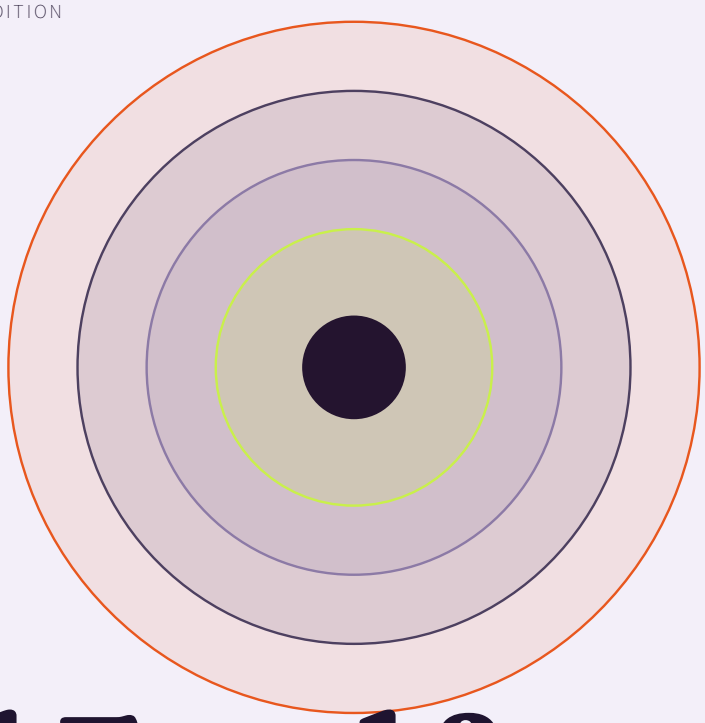


# Real Food for Pregnancy: The Science and Wisdom of Optimal Prenatal Nutrition

A reading of the book by Lily Nichols (2018)

1. ACTION BOOK

CONTENTS

# Inside this edition


**The book in a minute** 4

**The takeaways** 5

**Your action book** 7

**Before you go** 8

PART TWO · THE ACTION BOOK

**The setup checklist** 10

**Start each plate with protein and vegetables** 11

**Rotate the hard-to-get foods** 12

**Check one day's plate a week** 13


ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Real Food for Pregnancy: The Science and Wisdom of Optimal Prenatal Nutrition, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

# The book in a minute

Lily Nichols is a registered dietitian nutritionist and certified diabetes educator whose first book dealt with gestational diabetes. In this one she argues that standard prenatal advice leans too hard on grains and low-fat foods and too lightly on the nutrient-dense foods that carry what a growing baby needs. She builds her case nutrient by nutrient, with close attention to choline, glycine, folate, vitamin A, DHA and other nutrients, and names the foods that supply them, such as eggs, liver, slow-cooked meat on the bone, seafood, full-fat dairy and leafy greens. The book also covers food safety rules, supplements, lab tests, exercise, stress, environmental toxins and, in its last chapter, the fourth trimester after birth. It cites research throughout and includes sample meal plans and recipes.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

# The takeaways

1

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Pregnancy asks for better food more than it asks for more food.

Nichols pushes back on the idea of eating for two. Calorie needs rise only modestly, while the need for many vitamins and minerals rises much more. So the quality of each plate matters more than its size.

2

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Choline deserves the attention folate gets.

Choline helps build the baby's brain and neural tube, yet Nichols points out that most pregnant women eat less than the recommended amount and many prenatal vitamins contain little or none. Egg yolks and liver are the richest everyday sources, which is a large part of why she champions eggs.

3

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Glycine is the pregnancy nutrient almost nobody has heard of.

The baby needs glycine to build collagen for skin, bone and connective tissue. Lean muscle meat is low in it. It comes from collagen-rich foods such as bone broth, skin and slow-cooked cuts on the bone, which is why Nichols argues for eating more of the animal than the lean cuts.

4

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Liver is the most nutrient-dense food most pregnant women are told to skip.

Nichols argues that a modest amount of liver supplies vitamin A, folate, B12, iron and choline in forms the body uses readily. Many official guidelines, including the NHS in the UK, still advise avoiding liver in pregnancy because of its vitamin A, so ask your midwife or doctor before adding it.

5

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

### Vitamin A from carrots is not the same as vitamin A from eggs.

Orange and green vegetables carry beta-carotene, which the body has to convert, and some people convert it poorly. Nichols wants some preformed vitamin A from animal foods such as egg yolks and full-fat dairy as well, not plants alone.

6

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## The answer to mercury is choosing the right fish, not dropping fish.

Mercury warnings have led many pregnant women to avoid fish entirely. Nichols argues that low-mercury fish such as salmon and sardines bring DHA for the baby's brain and eyes, along with iodine and selenium, and that losing those is a real cost too.

7

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## Carbohydrates don't have to be the base of every plate.

Standard advice builds meals on bread, pasta and cereal. Drawing on her gestational diabetes work, Nichols argues for fewer carbohydrates, mostly from vegetables, legumes, fruit and dairy, with more protein and fat. Most guidelines still set a carbohydrate minimum for pregnancy, so talk to your clinician before cutting back.

8

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## A vegetarian pregnancy needs a map of its gaps.

Nichols lists nutrients that are hard or impossible to get from plants alone, including vitamin B12, choline, glycine, preformed vitamin A, vitamin K2, DHA, iron and zinc. The point is not to shame anyone's diet but to show where the gaps sit, so eggs, dairy, fish or supplements can fill them with a clinician's help.

9

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

## Food safety rules are about lowering risk, not banning whole foods.

Lists of forbidden foods, from sushi to salt, can scare women away from nourishing meals. Nichols looks at which of the common warnings hold up, and how to enjoy nutrient-dense foods while lowering the real risk of foodborne illness.

PUT IT TO WORK

# Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Make eggs a staple
- [ ] Cook one pot of bone broth
- [ ] Read your prenatal label
- [ ] Ask which lab tests make sense
- [ ] Put two fish meals on the menu

KEEP UP DAILY

- [ ] Start each plate with protein and vegetables
- [ ] Rotate the hard-to-get foods
- [ ] Check one day's plate a week

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

# Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

# The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

# The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

☐ SETUP 1

## Make eggs a staple

Buy a dozen eggs this week and plan them into at least three breakfasts or snacks.

Keep the yolks, because that is where the choline is.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 2

## Cook one pot of bone broth

Simmer a chicken carcass or beef bones with water and a splash of vinegar for several hours.

Freeze it in portions for soups, rice and sauces.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 3

## Read your prenatal label

Check whether your prenatal lists choline, iodine and vitamin D, and which form of folate it uses.

Take the label to your next appointment and ask whether anything is missing for you.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 4

## Ask which lab tests make sense

Ask your midwife or doctor whether tests such as iron, vitamin D or thyroid are worth doing for you.

Write the results down so you can compare them later.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 5

## Put two fish meals on the menu

Pick two low-mercury fish you actually like, such as salmon, sardines or trout, and write them into next week's dinners.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

# Start each plate with protein and vegetables

At every meal, put a protein and a non-starchy vegetable down first, add some fat, then add the starchy food you want.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 ○ | 7 ○ | 8 ○ |
| 9 ○ | 10 ○ | 11 ○ | 12 ○ | 13 ○ | 14 ○ | 15 ○ |
| 16 ○ | 17 ○ | 18 ○ | 19 ○ | 20 ○ | 21 ○ | 22 ○ |
| 23 ○ | 24 ○ | 25 ○ | 26 ○ | 27 ○ | 28 ○ | 29 ○ |
| 30 ○ | | | | | | |

## December 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 ○ | 2 ○ | 3 ○ | 4 ○ | 5 ○ | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

# Rotate the hard-to-get foods

Each week, include something collagen-rich, an egg meal, a fish meal and a few portions of leafy greens.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 ○ | 7 ○ | 8 ○ |
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| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

# Check one day's plate a week

Once a week, run a normal day of eating through the planner on this page and note which nutrients came up short.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

## November 2026

| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 ○ | 7 ○ | 8 ○ |
| 9 ○ | 10 ○ | 11 ○ | 12 ○ | 13 ○ | 14 ○ | 15 ○ |
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| 30 ○ | | | | | | |

## December 2026

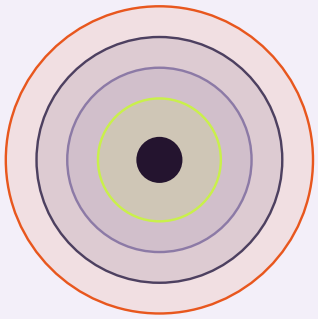
| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



# Eat for what the baby is building, one ordinary plate at a time.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER LILY NICHOLS