

# IODINE: VITAL FOR HEALTH

Pregnant women should make sure they obtain adequate amounts of iodine, because a deficiency can have dire consequences for their babies, including tripling the rate of miscarriage.

Inadequate levels of iodine during pregnancy can result in mental retardation, lower IQ (12–13 points, according to research from China) and learning difficulties for your child. Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder is now also linked with an iodine-deficient diet.

## iodine needs

Iodine is an essential trace element that's important for healthy thyroid function. Although we need only small amounts (150 micrograms per day for most adults), we need it *regularly* and pregnant and breastfeeding women require slightly more.

Unfortunately, much of our food supply is low in iodine, according to Food Standards Australia New Zealand, and 25 per cent of kids in Australia have a moderate iodine deficiency.

## food sources

Sources of iodine include seaweed, fish, dairy and iodised salt. Iodised salt has also been routinely added to breads (except organic ones) in Australia since 2009.

Some seaweeds (sea vegetables) supply excessive iodine. It's recommended that children and pregnant and breastfeeding women avoid more than one weekly serving of brown seaweeds (kelp, kombu and arame). Iodine concentrations in wakame-, dulse- and nori-containing products, however, are generally low, and these can be enjoyed several times per week.

Note, however, that hijiki (hiziki) contains unsafe levels of arsenic and should be avoided altogether.

To ensure that pregnant and breastfeeding women are covered, authorities also recommend a daily iodine supplement that provides 150 micrograms.

Sushi* (wrapped in seaweed), 1 roll	92 mcg
Canned salmon, 105 g	63 mcg
Milk, reduced fat, 1 cup	56 mcg
Bread, 2 slices (not organic)	45 mcg
Yoghurt, flavoured, ½ cup	32 mcg
Egg, 1 large	19 mcg
Ice-cream, 2 scoops	10 mcg

\* This is unsuitable for pregnant women if it contains raw fish.



Nutritionist Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and co-author of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See [www.sueradd.com](http://www.sueradd.com) for more nutrition information.