



RD Resources for Consumers:

Vegetarian Diets in Pregnancy

A well-balanced vegetarian diet during pregnancy can give your baby the best possible start.

Good nutrition is vital for all women during pregnancy. Eat a variety of foods, rich in nutrients and calories, to meet the needs of mother and baby.

Calorie Needs

Calorie need does not increase during the first trimester. In the second trimester, a woman needs an extra 340 calories. In the third trimester, she needs an extra 450 calories. Overweight women may need fewer calories, while underweight women may need more.

tip Add calories from nutrient rich foods.

Healthy Weight Gain

Ideal weight gain varies among women. This depends on weight before becoming pregnant.

Pre-pregnancy weight	Recommended weight gain
Underweight	28 to 40 pounds
Normal weight	25 to 35 pounds
Overweight	15 to 25 pounds
Obese	11 to 20 pounds

Stay Active

Be active everyday. Walking, swimming and yoga are great forms of physical activity during pregnancy.

Stay Hydrated

Fluid needs increase during pregnancy. Drink at least 8 - 12 cups daily. Water is the best choice.

Important Nutrients

Protein (71 grams)

Builds new tissue and repairs cells

- Dried beans
- Soy products
- Lentils
- Nuts & nut butters
- Eggs
- Soymilk
- Whole-grains
- Dairy products

Omega-3 Fatty Acid-DHA

Develops nerve and visual function

- Eggs from chickens fed a DHA rich diet
- Foods fortified with microalgae-derived DHA

tip Vegetarian & Vegan-friendly DHA supplements may be used.

Iron (48.6 mg)

Promotes tissue growth and increases blood supply

- Fortified cereals and breads; whole-grains
- Dark leafy greens
- Beans
- Dried fruit
- Prunes and prune juice
- Tofu

tip Include a source of vitamin C (e.g. bell peppers, tomatoes, citrus fruits) with meals to increase iron absorption. Avoid milk, tea, and coffee with iron-rich foods, which may decrease absorption.

Meal Planning Guide for Pregnant Vegetarians

The MyPyramid for Pregnancy and Breast Feeding Web site (www.mypyramid.gov/tips_resources/vegetarian_diets.html) provides meal plans that can be adapted for pregnant women who follow lacto-ovo and lacto vegetarian diets. MyPyramid for Pregnancy and Breast Feeding offers limited information for women following vegan diets. The following guideline can be used for pregnant vegans. These guidelines are the suggested minimum number of servings for pregnant women. Women who do not meet calorie needs to support adequate weight gain should choose additional servings from the food groups to increase calorie intake.

Food Group	Serving Size	# of Svgs.	Comments
Grains	1 slice bread; ½ cup cooked cereal or pasta; ¾ -1 cup ready-to-eat cereal	6	Choose whole or enriched grains
Vegetables	½ cup cooked vegetables; 1 cup raw vegetables; ¾ cup vegetable juice	4	Choose these calcium-rich foods often: dark green leafy vegetables (kale, collards, and mustard greens), broccoli, bok choy, Chinese cabbage, okra
Fruits	½ cup canned fruit; 1 medium fruit; ¾ cup fruit juice	2	Choose these calcium-rich foods often: calcium-fortified juice, figs
Legumes, nuts, seeds, milks	½ cup cooked beans, tofu, tempeh, textured vegetable protein (TVP); 3 ounces meat analog; 2 tbsp. nuts, seeds, nut or seed butter; 1 cup fortified soy or rice milk; 1 cup cow's milk; 1 cup yogurt	7	Choose these calcium-rich foods often: calcium-fortified soymilk, cow's milk, yogurt, calcium-set tofu, almond butter, tahini, tempeh, almonds, cheese, soybeans
Fats	1 tsp. oil or margarine	2	

tip Choose high calcium foods from each of the food groups (e.g. calcium-fortified breakfast cereals, bok choy, broccoli, collards, Chinese cabbage, kale, mustard greens, okra, calcium-fortified orange juice, dairy products, calcium-fortified soy milk, tempeh, calcium-set tofu, almonds).

Folate (600 mcg)

Produce and maintain new cells, reduce the risk of neural tube defects

- Dark green leafy vegetables
- Orange juice
- Wheat germ
- Enriched or whole-grain breads
- Enriched cereals (e.g. bran flakes)
- Dried beans
- Supplements or fortified foods

tip A daily intake of folate rich foods should be combined with 400µg of folic acid from supplements or fortified foods.

Zinc (11 mg)

Tissue growth and function

- Beans
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Fortified cereals
- Wheat germ
- Milk
- Hard cheeses (e.g. parmesan, asiago)

Iodine (220 mcg)

Hormone production

- Iodized salt

Calcium (1,000 mg)

Build strong bones and teeth, help muscle and nerve function

- Fortified soymilk or rice milk
- Dairy products
- Some dark green leafy vegetables (e.g. broccoli, kale, collard greens, bok choy)
- Calcium-set tofu
- Soybeans
- Almonds
- Figs
- Fortified orange juice

Vitamin B12 (2.6 mcg)

Helps maintain healthy nerve cells and red blood cells

- Fortified cereals
- Fortified soymilk
- Vitamin B12-fortified nutritional yeast
- Milk and yogurt
- Eggs

Vitamin D (600 IU)

Help body use calcium to form fetal bones

- Cow's milk
- Fortified cereals
- Eggs
- Vitamin D-fortified soymilk
- Skin exposure to sunlight

Sample Vegan Meal Plan

Breakfast

- 1 cup cold cereal with ¼ cup raisins and 1 cup fortified soymilk
- 1 slice whole-wheat toast with 2 tablespoons almond butter, sprinkled with wheat germ
- ¾ cup calcium-fortified orange juice

Snack

- ½ cup carrot sticks with ¼ cup hummus

Lunch

- Sandwich with ½ cup baked tofu, 2 slices whole-grain bread and lettuce
- 2 cups tossed salad with herbs and lemon juice

Snack

- 2 fresh figs
- 1 tbsp. almonds
- 1 cup fortified soymilk

Dinner

- 1 cup red beans and ½ cup brown rice
- ½ cup cooked kale with nutritional yeast
- 1 cup tomato slices drizzled with olive oil and herbs

Vegetarian Nutrition

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