



Vegetarian Nutrition

a dietetic practice group of the



Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

RD Resources for Consumers:

Vegetarian Diets During Lactation

A balanced vegetarian diet supports healthy breastfeeding.

Lower levels of environmental toxins are found in milk from women who follow a vegetarian diet. Breastfed children of well-nourished vegetarian mothers grow and develop normally.

Benefits of Breastfeeding

Breast milk is best. It provides all the nutrients a growing infant needs in the most digestible form. Breastfeeding is free, convenient and supports mother-child bonding. The most benefits are gained when children are breastfed for at least the first 6 months after birth. Children build stronger immune systems, suffer from less allergies, and have reduced risk of obesity later in life. Mothers reduce their risk of some cancers, and type 2 diabetes.

Calorie Needs and Weight Loss

The body uses extra calories when producing breast milk. Increased calorie needs are based on the amount of milk produced. On average, women use 330 more calories each day for the first 6 months of breastfeeding. During the second 6 months, they use an additional 400 calories. While this will aid in healthy weight loss after pregnancy, extra calorie intake will also be needed. To meet higher calorie needs, consume plenty of whole-grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, and seeds.

tip Visit http://www.mypyramid.gov/mypyramidmoms/breastfeeding_weight_loss.html for more information.

Tandem Nursing

When a woman nurses two children of different ages it is called "tandem nursing." Producing milk for two children requires more calories and nutrients than needed to feed one. High calorie and high nutrient foods in snacks and meals provide good sources of additional calorie intake. Remaining hydrated, by drinking extra water, is also highly recommended.

High calorie, High nutrient foods

- Avocado
- Nuts & nut butters
- Seeds & seed butters
- Dried fruits
- Full-fat soy products
- Bean spreads
- Fruit juices



300-Calorie Snack Ideas

- Whole-grain toast with 1½ tbsp. almond butter topped with sliced banana and strawberries
- ½ cup hummus with 1 cup of raw carrots and bell peppers
- Fruit smoothie with 1 cup frozen mango, ½ cup frozen pineapple, 1 cup soymilk
- ¼ cup guacamole with 1/3 cup baked tortilla chips
- ¼ cup of trail mix

Fluid Needs

Fluid needs increase while breastfeeding, therefore staying hydrated is key. Drink water throughout the day and while nursing. Low-fat or non-fat milk, 100% fruit juices, and soups are also good sources of fluid.

Meal Planning Guidelines for Breastfeeding Vegetarians

The MyPyramid for Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Web site (www.mypyramid.gov/tips_resources/vegetarian_diets.html) provides meal plans that can be adapted for breastfeeding women who follow lacto-ovo and lacto-vegetarian diets. MyPyramid for Pregnancy and Breastfeeding offers limited information for women following vegan diets. The following meal plan can be used for pregnant vegans. These guidelines are the suggested minimum number of servings for breastfeeding women. Some women may need additional servings and/or added fats to maintain desirable body weight.

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).

Important Nutrients

Protein (.59 g/lb.)

Example: A woman who weighs 150 lbs. would need approximately 89 g of protein per day (150 lbs x .59 g/lb = 88.5 g)

- Dried beans
- Tofu & Tempeh
- Nuts & nut butters
- Eggs
- Soymilk
- Whole-grains
- Dairy products

Omega-3 Fatty Acid-DHA

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

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

Vitamin B12 (2.6 mcg/day)

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

Calcium (1,000 mg/day)

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

Vitamin D (200 IU/day)

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

tip Breastfed infants should be given a 400 IU vitamin D supplement daily.

Resources

MyPyramid for Pregnancy & Breastfeeding, <http://www.mypyramid.gov/mypyramidmoms/index.html>

Raising Vegetarian Children by Joanne Stepaniak and Vesanto Melina

Simply Vegan, 4th ed. by Debra Wasserman and Reed Mangels

The Vegetarian Mother's Cookbook by Cathe Olson