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 a day. In the third trimester, she needs an extra 450 calories a day. Overweight women may need fewer calories, while underweight women may need more. Your weight gain during pregnancy helps to determine if you need more or fewer calories.

**Healthy Weight Gain**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-pregnancy weight</th>
<th>Recommended weight gain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underweight</td>
<td>28 to 40 pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal weight</td>
<td>25 to 35 pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>15 to 25 pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obese</td>
<td>11 to 20 pounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Be sure to discuss your weight gain goals during pregnancy with your healthcare professional.

**Stay Active**

Be active every day; try for 30 minutes of moderately intense activity daily. Walking, swimming and yoga are great forms of physical activity during pregnancy. Be sure to discuss exercise with your healthcare professional during your early prenatal visits.

**Important Nutrients**

**Protein**

*Builds new tissue and repairs cells. In the second and third trimesters, the protein recommendation is 25 grams per day higher than it was prior to pregnancy.*

- 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

Vegetarian & Vegan-friendly DHA supplements may be used.

**Iron**

*Promotes tissue growth and increases blood supply. Ask your healthcare provider if you need an iron supplement. Many women require supplemental iron in pregnancy*

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

Include a source of vitamin C (e.g. tomatoes, citrus fruits, bell peppers) with meals to increase iron absorption. Calcium supplements, tea, and coffee may decrease iron absorption. Try to avoid drinking or using these products at the same time that you are eating an iron-rich meal.

**tip** Add calories from nutrient rich foods.
Meal Planning Guide for Pregnant Vegetarians

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 more servings of foods to increase calorie intake.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Group</th>
<th>Serving Size</th>
<th># of Svgs.</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grains</td>
<td>1 slice bread; ½ cup cooked cereal or pasta; ¼ - 1 cup ready-to-eat cereal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Choose whole-grains often including brown rice, oats, whole-grain breads and pasta, millet, quinoa, bulgur, and amaranth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>½ cup cooked vegetables; 1 cup raw vegetables; ¼ cup vegetable juice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Choose calcium-rich vegetables often: e.g. kale, broccoli, bok choy, Chinese cabbage, okra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>1 medium fruit; ½ cup canned fruit; ¼ cup dried fruit; ¼ cup fruit juice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Choose calcium-rich foods often: calcium-fortified juice, figs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legumes, nuts, seeds, milks</td>
<td>½ cup cooked beans, tofu, tempeh, textured vegetable protein (TVP); 3 ounces of veggie meats (veggie burger, deli slices, etc.); 2 tbsp. nuts, seeds, nut or seed butter; 1 cup fortified soy or low-fat or fat-free cow's milk; 1 cup yogurt; 1 egg</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Choose calcium-rich foods often: calcium-fortified plant milks, dairy products, calcium-set tofu, almond butter, tahini, tempeh, almonds, soybeans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fats</td>
<td>1 tsp. oil, salad dressing, butter, margarine, ghee or 2 tablespoons mashed avocado</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>A daily intake of folate rich foods should be combined with 400μg of folic acid from supplements or fortified foods.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Folate

Found in prenatal supplements in the form of folic acid.
- Dark leafy greens
- Orange juice
- Wheat germ
- Whole-grain and fortified breads and cereals
- Dried beans

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

Zinc

Tissue growth and function
- Dried beans and lentils
- Nuts and seeds
- Fortified cereals
- Wheat germ
- Milk
- Hard cheeses (e.g. parmesan, asiago)

Iodine

Found in many prenatal supplements. Discuss supplement use with your healthcare provider.
- Iodized salt provides iodine

Calcium

Build strong bones and teeth
- Fortified soymilk and other plant milks
- Dairy products
- Some dark green leafy vegetables (e.g. broccoli, kale, collard greens, bok choy)
- Calcium-set tofu
- Figs
- Fortified orange juice

Vitamin B12

Found in prenatal supplements. Be sure to get vitamin B12 from supplements or fortified foods or dairy products every day.
- Fortified cereals
- Fortified soymilk and other plant milks
- Vitamin B12-fortified nutritional yeast
- Milk and yogurt
- Eggs

Vitamin D

Help body use calcium to form fetal bones
- Vitamin D-fortified cow's milk or fortified soymilk or other plant milks
- 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 1 tablespoons almond butter, sprinkled with wheat germ
- ¼ 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