



## Vegetarian Nutrition

a dietetic practice group of the  
**eat right.** Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics  
*Experts in Plant-Based Nutrition*

### RDN 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 people during pregnancy. Eat a variety of foods, rich in nutrients and calories, to meet your needs and those of your baby.

### Calorie Needs

Calorie need does not increase during the first trimester. In the second trimester, an extra 340 calories a day are needed. In the third trimester, an extra 450 calories a day are needed.

Those who are overweight may need fewer calories, while those who are underweight may need more. Your weight gain during pregnancy helps to determine if you need more or fewer calories.

**TIP:** Add calories from nutrient rich foods.

### Healthy Weight Gain

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

### Pre-pregnancy weight

Underweight  
Normal weight  
Overweight  
Obese

### Recommended weight gain

28 to 40 pounds  
25 to 35 pounds  
15 to 25 pounds  
11 to 20 pounds

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

### Stay Active

Be active every day; try for 30 minutes of moderately intense

activity at least five days a week. Walking, swimming and yoga are great forms of physical activity during pregnancy. Be sure to discuss exercise with your health care professional during your early prenatal visits.

### Important Nutrients

#### Protein

Builds new tissue and repairs cells. Protein recommendations are 25 grams per day higher than 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

**TIP:** 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 require supplemental iron in pregnancy.

- Fortified cereals and breads; whole-grains
- Dark leafy greens
- Cooked dried beans and tofu
- Dried fruit
- Prunes and prune juice

**TIP:** 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 using these products at the same time that you are eating an iron-rich meal.

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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.

Meal Planning Guide for Pregnant Vegetarians			
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 grains often including brown rice, oats, whole-grain breads and pasta, millet, quinoa, bulgur, and amaranth
Vegetables	½ cup cooked vegetables; 1 cup raw vegetables; ¾ cup vegetable juice	4	Choose calcium-rich vegetables often: e.g. kale, broccoli, bok choy, Chinese cabbage, okra
Fruits	1 medium fruit; ½ cup canned fruit; ¼ cup dried fruit; ¾ cup fruit juice	2	Choose calcium-rich foods often: calcium-fortified juice, figs
Legumes, nuts, seeds, milks	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	7	Choose calcium-rich foods often: calcium-fortified plant milks, dairy products, calcium-set tofu, almond butter, tahini, tempeh, almonds, soybeans
Fats	1 tsp. oil, salad dressing, butter, margarine, ghee or 2 tablespoons mashed avocado	3	

### 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

**TIP:** A daily intake of folate rich foods should be combined with 400 µg 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 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

### Fluid

Fluid needs increase somewhat in pregnancy. Try to drink about 10 cups of beverages per day, including drinking water.

The content found in this handout is intended for informational purposes only and is not intended to serve as a substitute for the consultation, diagnosis, and/or medical treatment of a qualified physician or healthcare provider. Please use this handout in conjunction with your dietitian.