



Vegetarian Nutrition

a dietetic practice group of the
Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics



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 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.

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

Be sure to discuss your weigh gain goals during pregnancy with your health care 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 health care 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

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 women require supplemental iron in pregnancy

- 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. 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.

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.

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	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

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 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 tablespoon 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