

Managing a Vegan / Vegetarian Pregnancy

Medical experts, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND), have given vegetarians and vegans the green light to continue their current way of eating, as long as it's well-planned. Some tips:

- 1. Don't start a new way of eating once you're pregnant:** Pregnancy is not the right time to become a vegetarian if you are not one already. The risks of nutritional deficiencies are more pronounced with a vegetarian diet and pregnancy is a time when you need more of certain vitamins and minerals
- 2. Eat beans for protein:** For protein, simply replace animal products with any type of bean, including soybean products like tempeh and tofu. Keep in mind that experts advise limiting your soy intake to one or two servings daily during pregnancy. In recipes, substitute one-half cup of beans for every 3 oz. of meat
- 3. Nuts:** Nuts are a great source of protein and healthy fats
- 4. Watch out for processed soy products:** Soy/veggie "meats" are usually laden with sodium and other preservatives and fillers. It's healthier to eat soy in its natural form, like tofu or edamame
- 5. Make sure you get enough iron:** Iron helps red blood cells deliver oxygen to the fetus and it protects you from anemia, a common problem during pregnancy even among meat eaters. Besides beans, other vegetarian iron sources include iron-fortified cereals, prune juice, spinach, and raisins
- 6. Consume Iron with Vitamin C foods:** Vitamin C rich foods such as red peppers, citrus fruits, and strawberries help your body absorb iron. Stir-fry red peppers with rice and beans or slice strawberries over iron-enriched cereal
- 7. Take a Vitamin B12 Supplement:** B12 is required for proper red blood cell formation and neurological function. It is most abundant in animal products, which makes getting enough of it tricky for vegetarians. The recommended dosage is 2.6 micrograms daily. Check your pre-natal vitamin to see how much is included
- 8. Include Dairy for Calcium & Vitamin D:** Dairy products are packed with these baby bone-building nutrients, and good for vegetarians; however, vegans will have to turn to fortified tofu, fortified orange juice, seaweed, figs, almonds, broccoli, collard greens and mustard greens for calcium and vitamin D
- 9. Omega-3 fatty Acids:** Cold-water oily fish, such as salmon, are the main sources of these healthy fats, which enhance fetal brain and nervous system development. Good plant sources include flaxseed oil or ground seeds, walnuts, and chia seeds. Supplements are also safe during pregnancy. The recommended dietary allowance (RDA) for pregnant women is 1.4 grams daily. Vegan omega-3 supplements are also available

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