







Vegetarian and Vegan Diet in Pregnancy

Healthy eating is very important before, during and after pregnancy to provide all the nutrients you need to keep yourself well and feeling good and grow a healthy baby. When you are following a vegan or vegetarian diet it can take some more planning to meet your nutritional requirements.

Eat regular Meals and Snacks

In order to fit all the foods you need into your day, aim to eat three main meals with 2-3 nourishing snacks per day in between your meals. Never skip a meal.

Sample times for regular meals and snacks:					
					
Breakfast	Snack	Lunch	Snack	Dinner	Snack

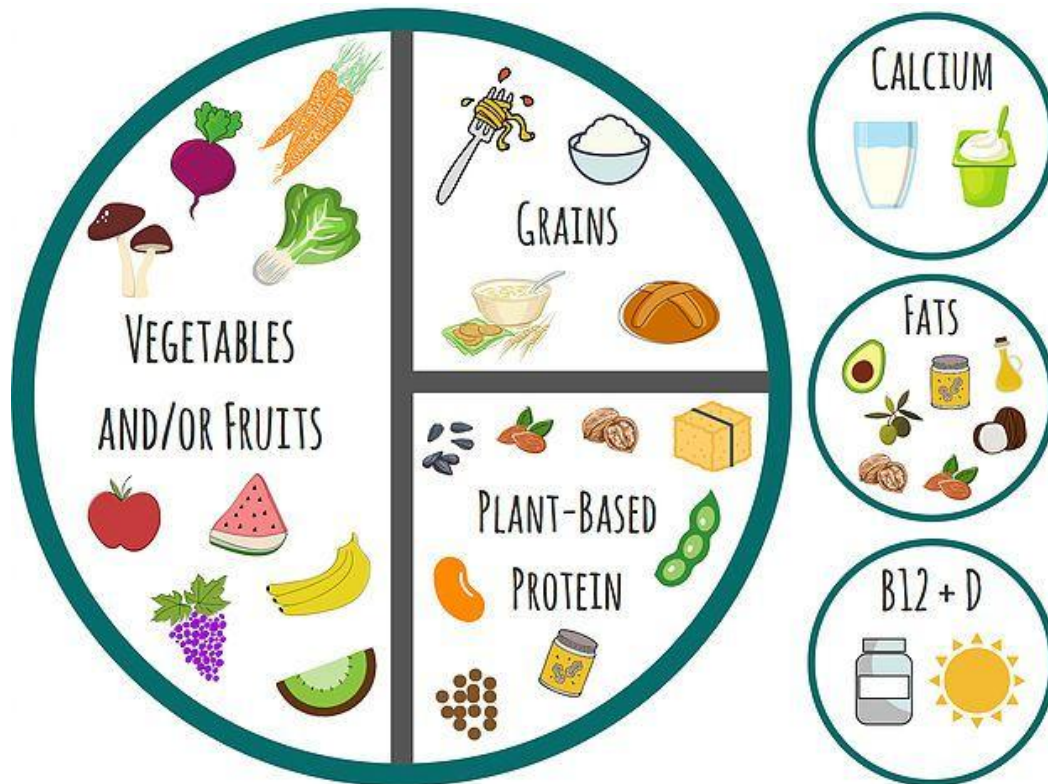
Eat a wide variety of different types and colours of fruit, vegetables, proteins and grains to ensure that you are getting all the vitamins and minerals you and baby need.

Wholegrain carbohydrates 3-5 servings of each day (for energy, vitamins and fibre)	Protein-rich foods: 3 servings of each day (supports growth & development)	Fruit and vegetables: 2-3 Fruit and 3-5 Vegetables each day (for vitamins and fibre)
2 slices of wholegrain bread	6 dessertspoons of cooked beans, peas and lentils	1 medium piece fresh fruit
1 tortilla wrap, chapatti, pita or naan bread	3 oz. cooked tofu/ tempeh	2 small fruit (kiwis, plums, clementine)
1 cup of high fibre cereal e.g. porridge, granola or muesli	40g nuts	3 dessertspoons of fresh, frozen or tinned fruit
2 cereal biscuits (Weetabix or Shredded wheat)	2 eggs	3 dessertspoons vegetables (fresh or frozen) or salad
2 medium or 4 baby potatoes or sweet potatoes	2 oz. cheese	1 small bowl homemade vegetable soup
1 cup (cooked) of whole-wheat pasta, brown rice, quinoa, couscous or noodles		4 oz unsweetened fruit juice

Fats are an important energy source and for healthy growth and development.

- Include sources of healthy fats daily from nuts, seeds, avocados, soy foods and small amounts of vegetable oils, like rapeseed and olive oils.
- Avoid fat from sweets, cakes, biscuits, creamy or oily sauces and fried foods.

The **plate model** is a useful guide to plan nutritionally-balanced meals. Aim for ¼ of your meal or plate to be made up of a protein source.



You will also need to pay close attention to some key nutrients:

1. **Iron** is important for healthy blood during pregnancy. A diet lacking in iron can lead to anaemia or low iron in the blood. If you are anaemic, you may feel tired, lethargic and short of breath.

Non-animal sources of iron for vegetarians and vegans are:

- ✓ Pulses e.g. beans, lentils, chickpeas
- ✓ Eggs
- ✓ Dark green leafy vegetable e.g. spinach
- ✓ Fortified breakfast cereals and wholemeal breads
- ✓ Nuts, seeds, dried fruits and tahini

Iron from non-animal sources are not as easily absorbed in the body, therefore it is recommended to:

- Eat these with vitamin C-rich food (e.g. oranges, lemons, limes, peppers, tomatoes, berries) at each meal to help absorb the iron.
- Avoid tea and coffee with meals as they can reduce iron absorption.
- Consider taking an iron supplement throughout pregnancy to maintain your iron stores.

2. **Omega-3 fatty acids** are important for your baby's eye and brain development. They are found in walnuts, soy, chia seeds and rapeseed oil. However, as it is difficult to meet your needs from these foods, you should consider taking an omega-3 supplement (not cod liver oil).

- 3. Calcium and vitamin D** are essential for bone health and blood pressure control for you and baby. Pregnant women require 1,000mg calcium every day (teenage girls require 1,300mg every day).
- Aim to eat 3-5 portions of calcium-rich foods each day.
 - You should also take a supplement containing at least 400 IU (10 mcg) vitamin D₃ daily.

Non-animal sources of calcium and vitamin D	Portion	Calcium	Vitamin D
Dairy alternatives			
Calcium-enriched yoghurt alternatives (e.g. soya)	125g pot	150mg	1ug
Calcium-enriched Soya, Oat and Almond 'milks'	200ml	240mg	1.5ug
Fruit and Vegetables			
Tofu (if set with calcium chloride – E509 – or calcium sulphate – E516 – not nigari).	60g	200mg	
Kale (cooked)	100g	150mg	
Pak choi (cooked)	100g	73mg	
Broccoli (cooked)	100g	40mg	
Orange	1 medium	40mg	
Orange juice with Calcium	200ml	270mg	
Dried figs	4 (50g)	115mg	
Nuts/ Seeds/ Beans			
Baked beans	½ tin (200g)	100mg	
Chickpeas	1 Tblsp (35g)	20mg	
Almonds	6 nuts	15mg	
Sesame Seeds/ Tahini paste	1 Tblsp (19g)	130mg	
<i>Leafy green vegetables are often rich in calcium, but some of them are also high in oxalates (compounds that bind calcium) which reduce its absorption. Some high-oxalate foods include spinach, beet, chard and rhubarb. Even though these foods contain calcium, you won't absorb much of it so they should not be considered good sources of calcium.</i>			

- 4. Vitamin B₁₂** is essential for healthy blood, heart and nervous system. Vitamin B₁₂ deficiency can lead to anaemia, irreversible nerve damage and birth defects. Pregnant women require 2.6 micrograms (mcg) every day. If you are following a vegan diet or do not get enough vitamin B₁₂ from foods (see list below), you will also need to take a **daily vitamin B₁₂ supplement of 2.0 micrograms (mcg)**.

Vegetarian and vegan sources of Vitamin B12	
Fortified soy or dairy alternatives	250 ml = 0.9 mcg
Fortified yogurt alternative	250 g = 1.4 mcg
Cheese	30 g = 0.4 mcg
Fish	3oz = 1.0 to 5.4 mcg (varies)
Eggs	1 large = 0.4 mcg
Fortified breakfast cereals	30g service = 0.63mcg

- 5. Iodine** is essential for your baby's brain development. Pregnant women require 200 mcg every day.
- Two or more servings of milk or yogurt and eating white fish once a week is recommended to meet your needs in pregnancy. If you follow a vegan diet, some fortified plant based milks now contain Iodine (always check the label).
 - A pregnancy multivitamin supplement containing 200 micrograms iodine daily may be required if dietary sources are inadequate.

Sample Meal Ideas

Breakfast

- Porridge made with fortified soya milk topped with berries/banana and nut butter/nuts/seeds
 - Scrambled tofu/egg with wholegrain toast
 - Beans on wholegrain toast +/- avocado/mushrooms/spinach
 - Wholegrain cereal with fruit and seeds
 - Wholegrain toast with nut butter and banana
 - Overnight oats
- And 1 glass of fortified orange juice or bowl of mixed fruit

Lunch

- Lentil soup with wholegrain bread
 - Roasted veg/falafel and hummus sandwich/wrap
 - Baked sweet potato with lentil and mushroom topping and salad
 - Balance bowl/Leftover dinner
- And 1 fortified yoghurt alternative

Dinner

- Stirfry with toasted cashew nuts and wholegrain noodles
 - Chickpea curry with brown rice
 - Veggie burgers with sweet potato chips and mixed salad
 - Chili non-carne with rice and guacamole
 - Lentil dahl with brown rice
- And 1 glass of milk alternative

Snacks ideas:

- Soya yogurt with berries & chopped nuts
- Piece of fruit
- Wholegrain crackers & small portion of vegan cheese
- Trail mix
- Hummus and veg crudités/pitta
- Rice cakes with banana and peanut butter
- Oatcakes with avocado and lime
- Small bowl of homemade vegetable or lentil soup
- Hot chocolate made with fortified soya/oat/almond milk.
- Chia seed pudding

Ask your dietitian for a vegan recipe booklet!