

Healthy Vegan Pregnancy



A healthy pregnancy starts before conception

Emotional wellbeing ♦ Healthy environment ♦ Physical activity ♦ Planned diet

“A balanced vegan diet can be enjoyed by children and adults, including during pregnancy and breastfeeding, if the nutritional intake is well-planned.”

[British Dietetic Association, 2017]

A well-planned diet provides all the nutrients you need, for you and your growing baby. Eat plenty of **fruits and vegetables**, **whole grains**, **starchy root vegetables**, **beans**, **nuts** and **seeds**.



Vitamins, minerals & essential fats

Folic Acid B9

Folic acid

Protects against nerve defects, such as spina bifida. Take 400mcg folic acid each day and ideally start 2-3 months before conception.

Vitamin A

Vitamin A

Requirements double during breastfeeding. Eat carotenoid-rich vegetables, such as sweet potato, carrot, pumpkin, peppers, spinach and broccoli daily..

Zinc Zn

Zinc

Essential for your baby's growth. Best plant sources are pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, quinoa, oats and legumes, and nutritional yeast.

Iron Fe

Iron

Include iron-rich foods, (legumes, nuts, seeds, whole wheat bread) in every meal along with vitamin C-rich foods to increase absorption. Squeeze lemon on to cooked greens or salads.

Vitamin B12

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Vegan diets are low in B12 as it's only available from fortified foods or supplements. It is essential for the development of brain and nerve cells. Take 25-100mcg daily or 1000mcg twice/week.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D3

Supplement with 15-25 mcg (600-1,000 IU) of plant-based D3 everyday, when sun exposure is limited, particularly during winter months. Our recommendations assumes that those on a vegan diet may not be consuming vitamin D from food sources. Please do check with your doctor.

Protein

Protein

Include a serving of high protein food into each meal and snack. Beans and legumes, soya milk, tofu, tempeh, nuts and seeds are good plant sources. Requirements increase in the third trimester and during breastfeeding.

Omega 3

Omega-3 fatty acids

Walnuts, flaxseed and chia seeds provide short-chain omega-3 (ALA). This may not produce adequate amounts of DHA & EPA for your baby's brain development. Supplement with algae-based DHA & EPA (500mg/day) during pregnancy and whilst breastfeeding.

Calcium Ca

Calcium

High calcium intake may protect against high blood pressure and preeclampsia in pregnancy. Daily consumption of calcium-fortified plant milks is one of the best ways to meet your calcium needs. Calcium-set tofu, some green vegetables, chia and sesame seeds, almonds and beans are also high in calcium.

Iodine I

Iodine

Plants are low in iodine. Although some plant milks are fortified, the most reliable source is a supplement (150-200 mcg daily). Do not start eating seaweed during pregnancy/ breastfeeding. If your diet before pregnancy included seaweed do not stop eating them before speaking with a dietitian, as your body might have become used to high iodine intakes.

Other things to know

Regular physical activity is essential



Aim for at least **150 minutes** of moderate intensity activity **every week** and as long as you **feel comfortable**.

Take care with strenuous exercise, Avoid lying flat on your back for prolonged periods and exercise where there is a risk of falling.

Take caution



Wash raw vegetables thoroughly before eating them, to reduce the risk of infection from listeria or toxoplasmosis.

Avoid unpasteurized foods like miso and sauerkraut; as well as raw sprouts as they may contain **E.coli** or **salmonella**, which could cause premature birth.

Avoid caffeine



Any amount of caffeine increases risk of miscarriage, stillbirth and low birth weight. Reduce intake over a couple of weeks with the aim to **eliminate completely**. Decaffeinated versions are safe.

*See our *Diet, lifestyle and fertility* factsheet for the caffeine content of some common drinks.

No safe alcohol limit during pregnancy



Any amount of alcohol can damage your baby's health.. The UK's Chief Medical Officer recommends **no alcohol** or **smoking** during pregnancy.

More information

pbhp.uk/health-zone#factsheets

nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/vegetarian-and-vegan-mums-to-be

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