

## Healthy Eating Tips: Vegetarian Eating

Most vegetarian diets, if planned and chosen well, can support a healthy pregnancy. However, strict vegetarian or vegan eating requires extra knowledge and careful planning. For this reason, this fact sheet is only for those women who will consume milk and milk alternatives and/or eggs during pregnancy.

### Nutrients to Note

Some nutrients take on extra importance during pregnancy because you need more of them and/or they are difficult to get. These are the nutrients to pay close attention to:

- **Folic Acid:** even before you get pregnant and all through your pregnancy you are advised to eat more folic acid rich foods *plus* take a supplement containing 0.4 milligrams.
- **Iron:** this very important mineral is very difficult for vegetarians to get. All pregnant women are advised to take a supplement of 30 milligrams of ferrous sulphate.
- **Calcium:** you need 1000 milligrams a day. You can easily get this from 2 servings of milk and alternatives or from fortified soy beverage or calcium-enriched orange juice plus a variety of other calcium containing foods such as tofu, legumes, sesame seeds, almonds, broccoli, Chinese cabbage, collard greens or kale. If you do not consume any of these foods you should take a calcium supplement.
- **Vitamin D:** you need 200 International Units or five micrograms daily. Two glasses of milk (but not other milk products) or fortified soy beverage will supply this amount. Margarine is also a source of vitamin D.
- **Essential Fatty Acids:** these fats are needed for the healthy development of your baby's vision and their nervous system.

### Are You a Vegan?

Without eggs, meat or milk products, it is very difficult to get enough calcium, Vitamin D, Vitamin B12, iron and zinc. Sometimes calories and protein are lacking too. If you want to remain a vegan during pregnancy, ask your doctor to refer you to a Registered Dietitian for nutrition counselling.

### What Should You Eat - The Vegetarian Food Guide

As a vegetarian who includes milk and milk alternatives and/or eggs, you can follow the same healthy eating pattern recommended to all pregnant women in Canada's new Food Guide - *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. To ensure that you receive enough nutrients be sure to choose from a variety of meat alternatives such as beans, lentils, eggs, tofu, soy-based meat substitutes, nuts, nut butter and seeds.

The guide that follows shows *what* and *how much* food a non pregnant women between 19-50 years needs each day. Women in their 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> trimesters of pregnancy and those who are breastfeeding need a small amount of extra food each day about 2-3 extra Food Guide Servings.

How will you know how much you should eat? Let your appetite be your guide. Eat when you are hungry and stop when you are satisfied. If you have a slow and steady weight gain, chances are, you are eating the right amount of food.



Food Group	Source of these Key Nutrients	Examples of One Food Guide Serving
<b>Vegetables &amp; Fruit</b> 7-8 servings  Dark green and orange vegetables and orange fruit are most nutritious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ folic acid</li> <li>➤ fibre</li> <li>➤ vitamin C</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 cup/250 mL of leafy vegetables</li> <li>• ½ cup/125 mL cooked vegetable, chopped fruit, fruit juice</li> <li>• 1 medium-sized fruit</li> <li>• 2 small fruit (apricots, plums)</li> </ul>
<b>Grain Products</b> 6-7 servings  Whole grain products are best	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ fibre from whole grains and bran</li> <li>➤ iron</li> <li>➤ folic acid (enriched products)</li> <li>➤ zinc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 slice of bread (35g)</li> <li>• ½ bagel (45g)</li> <li>• ½ hamburger bun or english muffin</li> <li>• ½ cup/125 mL rice, pasta or couscous</li> <li>• 30 g cold cereal or ¾ cup/175 mL of hot cereal</li> </ul>
<b>Milk and Alternatives</b> 2 servings  Choose lower-fat milk and yogurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ protein</li> <li>➤ calcium</li> <li>➤ Vitamin D (milk only)</li> <li>➤ Vitamin B12</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 cup/250 mL milk or fortified soy beverage</li> <li>• 2 thick slices cheese</li> <li>• 1 ½ oz/50 g block cheese</li> <li>• ¾ cup/175 g yogurt</li> </ul>
<b>Meat Alternatives</b> 2 servings  Choose legumes, veggie meats, nuts, seeds, cheese and eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ protein</li> <li>➤ fibre</li> <li>➤ iron</li> <li>➤ zinc</li> <li>➤ calcium</li> <li>➤ Vitamin B12 (cheese and eggs only)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ¾ cup/175 mL beans, peas or lentils</li> <li>• 2 tbsp/30 mL nut or seed butters</li> <li>• ¾ cup/175 mL tofu</li> <li>• ¼ cup/60 mL nuts or seeds</li> <li>• 2 whole eggs (4 egg whites)</li> <li>• 2 ½ oz/75 g of meat</li> <li>• analogue or soy cheese</li> </ul>

**Oils and Fats** are an important part of a healthy diet and in saying so, so is the **amount** and **type** of fat you choose. Everyone should include a small amount each day, about 30-45 mL/2-3 Tbsp of unsaturated fats such as olive, canola or soybean oil. This includes oil used for cooking, salad dressing, margarine and mayonnaise. Limiting saturated fat such as butter, lard and shortening may help to decrease your risk of cardiovascular disease.

### Meet Jane

Jane is 31 years old, 5 feet 5 inches tall and weighed 138 pounds before pregnancy. She walks for 30 minutes every day and is now in her second trimester. Jane follows her healthy pre-pregnancy diet and adds 2-3 extra food guide servings each day.

Here are examples of how Jane could do this:

- An extra slice of toast and a banana at breakfast, or
- Cheese (30 g), melba toast (4) and an apple as a second afternoon snack, or
- Extra servings of vegetables (1/2 cup) and brown rice (1/2 cup) at dinner with 3/4 cup of yogurt for dessert.



Want more information on A Healthy Start for You and Your Baby? Visit our Web site at [www.pdhu.on.ca](http://www.pdhu.on.ca).