

# Vegetarian nutrition: how to get key nutrients during pregnancy

Nutrient	Recommended during Pregnancy	Importance	Food Sources	
			Plant	Animal
<b>Vitamin B12</b>	2.6 micrograms per day	An adequate supply of vitamin B12 is essential for normal blood formation and neurological function. Primarily found in animal products and some fortified foods.	Foods fortified with vitamin B12 such as breakfast cereals, soy-based beverages, veggie burgers and nutritional yeast	Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, low-fat dairy products
<b>Calcium</b>	1000 milligrams per day (1300 milligrams daily for those 14-18 years of age)	It is important to get adequate calcium to maintain bone strength. Chronic calcium deficiency can cause osteoporosis and subsequently lead to an increased risk of fractures. Major dietary source is milk and milk products. During pregnancy, the body compensates by adjusting your calcium absorption from food; therefore, the daily recommended intake for calcium does not increase, as long as you meet the daily minimum requirements. However, vegetarians may be deficient in calcium if they avoid dairy products. Prenatal vitamins alone do not provide adequate amounts of calcium. For strict vegetarians, it may be difficult to fulfill daily needs and calcium supplements may be necessary.	Fortified breakfast cereals, soy products (tofu, fortified soy based beverages), calcium-fortified orange juice, and some dark green leafy vegetables (collard greens, turnip greens, bok choy and mustard greens)	Low-fat dairy products, salmon and sardines with bones
<b>Vitamin D</b>	5 micrograms per day (200 international units)	The primary function is to aid in the absorption of calcium and phosphorus. Vitamin D deficiency can impair normal bone metabolism which may lead to osteoporosis. Major dietary source is fortified dairy products. More restrictive diets should include products fortified with vitamin D.	Soy milk, fortified margarines, sunlight	Low-fat fortified milk products, fish oils and eggs
<b>Iron</b>	27 milligrams per day	Iron plays a role in the formation of red blood cells. Daily recommended intake of iron increases during pregnancy. Plant foods contain less iron and are not as easily absorbed as animal-based sources of iron. Add vitamin C-rich foods or drinks, like citrus fruit or juices, tomatoes or broccoli to meals to help your body absorb iron better. If you take additional iron, avoid eating foods such as caffeine and calcium with supplements.	Iron-fortified cereals, spinach, kidney beans, black-eyed peas, lentils, turnip greens, soybeans, tofu, black strap molasses, whole-wheat breads and some dried fruits such as apricots, prunes and raisins	Organ meats, meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, egg yolks
<b>Protein</b>	1.1 gram/kg daily ~70-90 grams per day	Essential for growth, maintenance and tissue repair. Adequate protein can be obtained by eating a variety of plant sources.	Beans, nuts, nut butters, peas, soy products (tofu, tempeh and veggie burgers)	Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, low-fat dairy products
<b>Zinc</b>	11 milligrams per day (12 milligrams per day for those 14-18 years of age)	Essential for proper growth and development. There are a variety of plant and animal sources of zinc	Beans (white, kidney and chickpeas), zinc-fortified breakfast cereals, firm tofu, legumes, wheat germ and pumpkin seeds	Oysters, meat, eggs, poultry, seafood, milk

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