

Vegetarians – healthy eating in pregnancy

Types of vegetarian diet

- Semi-vegetarian – includes fish and/or poultry, eggs and dairy products.
- Lacto-ovo-vegetarian – includes dairy products and eggs.
- Lacto-vegetarian – includes dairy products.
- Ovo-vegetarian – includes eggs.
- Vegan – includes only plant foods and no animal products.

How can I make sure I am getting the nutrients my baby and I need?

A vegetarian diet can provide all you and your baby need, but you need to make sure what you are eating contains important vitamins and minerals. The key is careful planning.

The following chart lists nutrients that are particularly important in pregnancy that you may be, or become, deficient in if you are following a vegetarian diet. If you are thinking about taking a vitamin or mineral supplement, talk to your doctor or midwife first.

Nutrient	Purpose	Vegetarian food source
Iron	Used in red blood cells to deliver oxygen throughout the body and to the developing baby. Your baby stores iron in late pregnancy.	Vegetarian sources contain far less iron than meat sources. Fish and poultry are good sources of iron. Vegetarian sources include: dark green leafy vegetables, whole grains, soy products and fortified cereals. Iron is not as well absorbed from vegetable sources as it is from meat. Iron absorption is improved if vitamin C rich foods, for example oranges, tomatoes, broccoli, capsicum and cabbage are included with your meals.
Zinc	Needed for cells, that make up our body, to grow.	Fish and poultry are excellent sources of zinc. Strict vegetarians must plan carefully or supplement this mineral. Vegetarian sources include nuts, seeds, legumes, hard cheeses, whole grains, soy products and wheat germ.
Calcium	Needed for the developing bones and teeth of the baby and for milk production.	Milk, yoghurt and cheese are the best sources of calcium. Non-dairy sources include dark green leafy vegetables, broccoli, almonds, corn tortillas, legumes and calcium fortified soy products, tofu, and orange juice.
Vitamin B12	Needed for cell growth and nervous system development.	Found in all animal products including milk products and eggs. Plants do not contain this vitamin. If milk products and/or eggs are not included in the diet, this vitamin must be taken as a vitamin supplement. If you are on a vegan diet you should check your vitamin B12 levels with a blood test.