

# Vegetarian pregnancy, vegetarian babies



Useful information to support you and your baby



“ As a vegetarian parent, I believe I am much more conscientious about providing and maintaining a healthy, balanced diet for my family. As a veggie in a predominantly meat-eating society, you have to be that much more aware of where you get your nutrients from. Vegetarianism requires a different way of thinking about food. Many non-veggies seem to believe that as long as some form of meat is included in the diet, you’re okay. ”

Susan, mother of Kiri and Julia

## Introduction

For many of us, thinking about parenthood, being pregnant or having a new baby can lead to a lifestyle reassessment. We all want to do our best for our children’s health and, with new responsibilities, we want to be certain of our own health and fitness too. The best reassurance about the suitability of a vegetarian or vegan diet for pregnant women and babies comes from the people who really know: the women who have had trouble-free vegetarian and vegan pregnancies, and the proud parents of healthy vegetarian and vegan children. We haven’t used professional models in this booklet – just happy, healthy veggies who want to share their experiences with you.

Please remember to speak to your health professional about any concerns you may have.

# Pre-conception

The health of both mother and baby is influenced not only by diet during pregnancy, but also by what the mother eats before conception. Eating a healthy diet before becoming pregnant will give your body a good store of nutrients for the baby to draw from. Ensure that you have a well-balanced diet with plenty of fruit, vegetables (especially green vegetables) and wholegrain cereals, and try to avoid eating too many fatty foods, sweets, biscuits and cakes. Now is also the time to make other healthy lifestyle changes such as stopping smoking and cutting back on alcohol significantly.

If you find you are pregnant before you have had time to think about your diet pre-conception, then don't worry, there is still plenty of time to make healthy changes to your diet.

N.B. See also folic acid information on page 5.

**“It is possible for vegetarians and vegans (people who eat no animal products at all, including dairy products) to be adequately nourished for successful pregnancy and lactation, but they need to be knowledgeable about nutrition and plan their diet carefully.”**

**Early Life Nutrition and Lifelong Health, British Medical Association Feb 2009.**

“ *Being vegan and bringing up my son vegan is no problem. It's such a healthy diet and Lucas is always bouncing with energy. I haven't needed iron supplements with either of my pregnancies – unlike many meat-eating mums I know.* ”

Kat



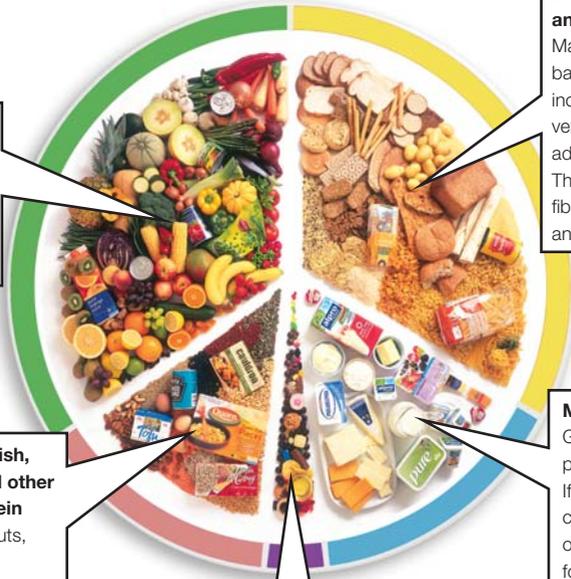
Photo: Corin Jeavons

# Pregnancy

Pregnancy is a time when good nutrition is vital, for vegetarians and non-vegetarians alike. It is a time of readjustment as well as growth. As you may know the nine months are divided up into three trimesters, and many women experience changes in mood, activity and appetite with the different stages of pregnancy. There is little truth in the old saying that pregnancy means eating for two. The extra energy needed averages less than 200 kilocalories (kcal) a day. This is equivalent to two slices of bread with margarine, or a small jacket potato with baked beans or cheese. Some women do feel a lot more hungry than this and, so long as they are gaining weight at the right rate, they should eat according to their appetite.

Health advice given to the general population equally applies to vegetarians. A healthy diet includes plenty of fruit and vegetables and starchy foods; moderate amounts of alternatives to meat and fish (high protein foods, such as pulses, eggs and soya); moderate amounts of dairy produce or alternatives; and small amounts of foods containing fat and sugar. If your overall diet is made up of roughly the proportions shown in the eatwell plate, a balanced and healthy diet should be achieved.

## The Vegetarian Eatwell Plate



**Fruit and vegetables**  
Fresh, frozen, juiced, canned or dried fruit and vegetables. These supply vitamins, minerals and fibre.

**Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods**  
Make these starchy foods the basis of most meals. Try to include wholemeal or wholegrain versions when possible. Avoid adding too much fat. These supply carbohydrates, fibre, protein and some vitamins and minerals.

**Alternatives to meat and fish, including eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein**  
Include a variety of pulses, nuts, seeds, eggs and other soya, mycoprotein and wheat proteins in the diet to ensure adequate intakes of protein, minerals and vitamins.

**Foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar**  
Although some fat is needed in the diet, eat these foods sparingly, and look out for low fat alternatives.

**Milk and dairy foods**  
Good sources of calcium, protein and some vitamins. If avoiding dairy foods, choose fortified soya, rice or oat drinks or ensure other foods high in calcium are included.

# Nutrients

## Fluid

You may find that you are more thirsty during pregnancy. This is natural as fluid intake should increase. Drink frequently and never allow yourself to become too thirsty. Include plenty of fresh water, diluted fruit juices and milk (soya or cow's). Drinks containing caffeine (tea, coffee and cola) should be limited and alcohol should be avoided altogether if possible. The Food Standards Agency (FSA) guidelines specify having less than 200mg caffeine daily.

## Protein

Increased protein needs in pregnancy are usually met by simply eating a bit more. Protein can be found in dairy products, cereals, pulses (beans), nuts, seeds, eggs and other soya, mycoprotein and wheat proteins.

## Iron

The need for iron is increased during pregnancy, especially during the later stages. Anaemia due to iron deficiency is common in pregnancy whether you are vegetarian or not. Good vegetarian sources of iron are wholegrain cereals, pulses, leafy green vegetables, nuts, dried fruits and fortified breakfast cereals. Iron absorption is increased if taken with a good source of vitamin C, which can be found in fresh fruit and vegetables and some other foods (e.g. potatoes), so having a glass of fruit juice with an iron-rich main meal is ideal.

Iron levels normally decrease during pregnancy. If a blood test demonstrates your iron stores are low, your doctor may prescribe iron tablets. If you think you are not eating enough iron rich foods, you may consider

taking an iron supplement. As with all supplements, remember to discuss them with your health professional.

## Calcium and Vitamin D

The body needs extra calcium during pregnancy, especially in the later stages, to enable the baby's bones to develop. Calcium absorption is more efficient during pregnancy and this should provide enough to meet requirements. However, vegans and vegetarian women who consume few dairy products need to be particularly careful to ensure adequate calcium in the diet. Some vegan women, especially if they intend to breastfeed, may decide that a calcium supplement is a wise precaution, although with a good intake of calcium-rich foods it may not be necessary. Good sources of calcium include green leafy vegetables, almonds, sesame seeds or tahini, cow's milk, fortified soya milk, tofu, cheese, bread and yoghurt.

Vitamin D is essential for calcium absorption and can be obtained from sunlight, margarine, dairy products and some fortified breakfast cereals. If you cover much of your skin, spend little time outside or have dark skin you should consider taking a vitamin D supplement, especially in the winter months. It is recommended by the Department of Health for all pregnant women to take a daily 10µg vitamin D supplement.

## Folate / Folic Acid

Folate is one of the B vitamins needed in increased amounts during the time before pregnancy and during pregnancy, a lack of



“ *Homemade fruit smoothies, made with cow's milk or calcium-fortified soya milk, were a life-saver in my first trimester when I suffered from morning sickness. They provided much-needed calcium, vitamins, and calories without actually having to 'eat' – the thought of which made me feel queasy!* ”

Susan

which has been shown to contribute to the possibility of birth defects. Vegetarians usually have a high intake of folate since good sources of this vitamin are green leafy vegetables, fruit, peanuts, yeast extract and wholegrain cereals. Research has shown that long term vegetarians have a particularly good folate status. However women trying to conceive are advised to take a 400 microgram supplement (400µg) of folic acid every day, from the time you stop using contraception to the twelfth week of your pregnancy. Some women are advised to take higher doses, e.g. those with coeliac disease and those who have had a previous baby with spina bifida.

## Vitamin B12

Vitamin B12 is essential to the growth and development of your baby. If adequate amounts of dairy products, eggs and fortified foods, such as yeast extract, are included in your diet, then you should have enough vitamin B12. It is especially important for vegans to include a reliable source of vitamin B12 in the diet during pregnancy. Some vegan foods, such as certain brands of soya milk, margarines, yeast extracts, some breakfast cereals and veggieburger mixes are fortified with this vitamin. If you feel that your intake of vitamin B12 is inadequate, then a supplement is highly recommended.

## Omega 3 fats

It is now recognised that long chain omega 3 fatty acids perform an important role in the development of the baby's brain and eyesight while in the womb. There are no vegetarian sources of long chain omega 3 fatty acids but, to optimise your intake of short chain omega 3 fatty acids (which our bodies can convert to long chain fatty acids), try including two teaspoons of flax seed oil in your diet each day, taken either on its own or mixed into dressings etc. Flax oil is also available in vegetable capsules, as is algal oil, which is a direct source of the long chain omega 3 fatty acids known as DHA (docosahexaenoic acid). It is important to avoid a very high intake of whole flax seeds as they contain lignans. Lignans are a group of chemical compounds found in plants which, if consumed in excess, could affect hormone balance during pregnancy.

If taking supplements make sure to choose veggie versions avoiding gelatine.

# Trimester Guide

## 0–3 Months

Women usually feel different and may experience tiredness or sickness, particularly in the morning.

## 3–6 Months

Your baby needs more energy now but your metabolic rate slows down and most women ease up a bit on physical activity, which helps to compensate. You may feel more hungry than usual and should choose extra cereals, pulses, nuts and seeds, dairy products (unless you are vegan) and starchy vegetables such as potatoes.

## 6–9 Months

The baby is maturing now and this is a time for slowing down and preparing for the birth. You will need to eat an extra 200 kcal a day. The baby takes up a lot of space and may press on your stomach, so many women feel they need to eat small meals more frequently at this stage. Most women tend to gain around 10 to 12.5kg during pregnancy. Weight gain often slows down during the last few months of pregnancy.

“ Having had a chat with my health professional I continued to enjoy many outdoor activities. ”

Vicky



# General Advice

## **‘Morning’ sickness**

Studies show that about three quarters of all women experience nausea and vomiting during pregnancy, especially in the first few months, although it can last throughout pregnancy. Morning sickness may be relieved by having a dry biscuit or toast before getting up. Avoiding long intervals between meals helps, as nausea often occurs at the same time as hunger. Starchy foods, such as bread and potatoes, should be eaten regularly as they help maintain blood sugar levels and fill the stomach, helping to relieve sickness. If symptoms persist you must see your midwife or health professional.

## **Food safety**

Vegetarians routinely avoid many of the foods that should not be eaten in pregnancy. Because of the risk of listeria remember to cut out soft cheeses, such as Brie and mould ripened cheese e.g. Stilton. Cottage cheese or hard cheeses, such as Cheddar, should be used instead. Both free-range and battery eggs have been found to contain salmonella, therefore you must cook all eggs thoroughly so that the yolk is hard. You may also wish to avoid dishes and products containing raw or partially cooked eggs e.g. home-made mayonnaise.

Vitamin A supplements should also be avoided (even if part of a multi-vitamin). You need some Vitamin A, but having too much means that levels could build up and harm your unborn baby. Ask your health professional for more information.

In August 2009 the Department of Health changed its advice for pregnant women who are not directly allergic to peanuts to the following: “If mothers would like to eat peanuts or foods containing peanuts during pregnancy or whilst breastfeeding, then they can choose to do so as part of a healthy balanced diet, irrespective of whether they have a family history of allergies.”

## **Digestive problems**

Heartburn is very common in the later stages of pregnancy. It can be alleviated by avoiding large meals and instead choosing small frequent meals or snacks. It can help to sit up very straight when eating and avoid activity just after a meal. Some people have reported spicy and fatty foods, fizzy drinks and citrus fruits make the problem worse. During pregnancy, the digestive system absorbs nutrients more efficiently and this can contribute to constipation. Iron tablets often make the problem worse. Constipation can be relieved by increasing fluid intake, including plenty of wholegrain cereals, pulses, fruits and vegetables in the diet and being active.

## **Conclusion**

A healthy vegetarian diet can provide you with all the nutrients you need during your pregnancy and give your baby the best possible start in life. A vitamin and mineral supplement should not be needed if a good balanced vegetarian diet is followed, but will not cause any harm if taken as a precaution, as long as it does not contain vitamin A.



“ In the last trimester I was extremely anaemic. My haemoglobin(HB) level was 7 g/dl and they (health professionals) like it to be 12 and above. The doctors wanted to put me on iron tablets, but when I was prescribed them they were coated in gelatine, as were the next lot. I saw numerous doctors and none of them knew of any iron tablets that were veggie friendly. I then was told, by a chemist I think, that I could take iron in syrup form, so I did. Unfortunately this made little difference. After more blood tests and a week before my delivery it turned out to be my B12 level that was really low. I had three shots of that and it brought my HB right up. This meant I didn't have to have a blood transfusion after Josie was born. Next time around I will make sure I have plenty of fortified yeast extract and even take a multivitamin supplement (without vitamin A) throughout my whole pregnancy, not just folic acid. ”

Georgia

# Baby

## Feeding your Newborn

Once your baby is born you must still take care of yourself and the food you eat.

### Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding gives your baby the best possible start in life. During lactation, the breastfeeding mother will need to increase her energy intake by around 500kcal a day.

Make sure that you eat plenty of protein, and vitamin rich foods (see nutrients section). Recommended intakes of calcium and zinc are also increased, so extra food sources are required. It is important to drink enough fluids and keep your intake of alcohol as low as

possible. See page 8 for advice about eating peanuts. While breastfeeding, all mothers are recommended to take a 10 microgram vitamin D supplement daily. Sources of omega 3 fats are also important for breastfeeding women.

### Formula Milk

Check with manufacturers to ensure the products are not contaminated with animal rennet or fish oils. Manufacturers tend to reformulate regularly so it's a good idea to check with their customer service departments. Always seek the advice of your GP or health visitor before giving soya infant milk to a baby.



Liz with her daughter Orla

“ Breastfeeding is the most natural and satisfying thing in the world but it's not always easy to get started so don't be shy of asking for advice and support. If you can get through those first few difficult weeks, you'll be so glad you persisted.”

Liz



“ I found weaning initially daunting, especially once the health visitors start talking to you about veggie babies getting enough iron and protein. Actually once you start it’s OK but I did feel slightly anxious about what to give Kieran. I found the best tip was to introduce each food slowly (to work out if he has an allergy) and on its own (to see exactly what he likes). Now I know his favourites, I can get him to eat all the things he doesn’t like, by mixing them with his favourites. ”

Vicky

## Introduction of solid foods

Introducing solid foods may prove difficult initially regardless of your baby’s diet. The nutritional requirements of a small baby are high, as they need proportionally more protein, calcium and most other nutrients than at any other time of their life.

Bringing up your child as a vegetarian, you will want to get them used to a wide variety of foods, including cereals, pulses, nuts and seeds, dairy and soya produce, fruit and vegetables. Your baby may initially reject stronger tasting foods, such as broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage, but may like them a little while later, so keep trying.

It is quite safe to bring up your baby as a vegan, with no animal foods at all, as long as

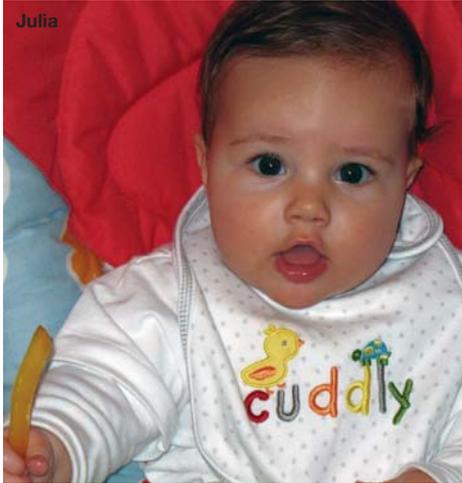
you make sure that plenty of nutrient rich foods are included. It is especially important for vegan babies to eat good sources of calcium, iron, vitamin B12, vitamin D and protein.

Introducing solid foods is a gradual process. It begins when you start to replace your baby’s usual milk with solid foods. This is known as complementary feeding, as the solid food complements your baby’s usual milk feeds, but doesn’t replace them entirely. The Department of Health recommendation is to start feeding solid foods from around six months in addition to milk feeds. At this stage babies need a source of iron in their diet as breast or formula milk can no longer provide enough. Solid foods should never be introduced before 4 months because the baby’s gut will not be mature enough to cope at this stage.

**“Well-planned vegetarian diets are appropriate for individuals during all stages of the life-cycle including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, and adolescence.”**

**American Dietetic Association 2009**

# Complementary Feeding



**Please refer to the complementary feeding table (see page 14) for timings to introduce certain food to your baby.**

“ Look out for no-added salt stock powder and no-added salt yeast extract in health food shops. We use these in all our cooking now, reducing the whole family’s salt intake and making it easier for baby to enjoy the same food as the rest of the family.”

Liz

## Before 6 months

Before the age of four months babies can’t properly digest any foods other than breast or formula milk, which remains by far the most important source of nutrition after the age of six months. Current recommendations are not to introduce solid foods before your baby is

around six months old. However, if you do decide to introduce your baby to solid foods before six months, there are some foods you should avoid as they may cause allergies or make your baby ill. These include wheat-based foods and other foods containing gluten (e.g. bread, rusks and some breakfast cereals), eggs, nuts, seeds and soft and unpasteurised cheeses. Ask your health visitor for advice.

## 6-8 months

Start by introducing one teaspoon of pureed fruit or pureed cooked vegetables. Or try baby rice mixed with breast, formula milk or cooled boiled water. Try after a milk feed or whenever works best for your baby. Take care that the food is adequately cooled. The nutrition of the food is not so important initially, as milk still supplies most of the nutrients needed.

As the weeks go on, milk remains the most important food in your baby’s diet, but you can gradually increase the number of times solid food is given to several times a day.

By the age of seven months most babies will be regularly eating solids, although milk still forms a large part of their diet. In particular solid foods now provide an important source of iron. You can purée or sieve family foods to give variety, as long as they do not contain added salt or sugar.

Try introducing tofu and mashed lentils if your baby is not already eating them.

## 9-12 months

Now your baby will gradually be able to cope with lumpier foods. Foods from the family table



Josie

“ *Once the kids were old enough to handle family foods like stews and mild curries, I would often add a dollop of plain, full fat yogurt to their portion. It increases the fat and protein content and cools down both the temperature and any spices, making it much easier to share a single main meal with the whole family.* ”

Joe

can be included in the baby's diet as long as they do not contain salt. Well cooked, mashed peas and beans can be introduced – they are a little difficult to digest so can cause problems if introduced earlier.

When your baby is able to chew, pieces of fruit, sandwiches and toast can become normal, everyday foods. By the age of 12 months your baby should be enjoying three meals a day along with frequent suitable snacks, e.g. grated cheese, carrot sticks, fruit, etc.

Many companies produce baby foods suitable for vegetarians, but many parents prefer to make home made food for their baby. If you do buy ready prepared baby food, always check the ingredients label to be sure that it is totally vegetarian.

Look out for hidden ingredients such as omega 3 oils from fish.

## Complementary Feeding Table

Stage of weaning	Comments/ What to feed?	What not to feed?
<b>Under 6 months</b>	<p>Current recommendations are to begin weaning at the age of 6 months. Babies should never be weaned before 4 months as they are unable to properly digest any foods other than breast/formula milk.</p> <p>Advice of a health professional should be sought for those wishing to start weaning before 6 months.</p>	<p>Wheat based foods (which contain gluten), cows milk, nuts, eggs, salt, sugar, honey or citrus fruits should be avoided, as they can cause an allergic reaction or contain harmful bacteria.</p>
<b>6-9 months</b>	<p>Most babies are ready to start solids at 6 months of age as they need more than milk alone in their diet.</p> <p>Mashed or puréed cooked vegetables, e.g. carrot, potato, courgette.</p> <p>Mashed or puréed ripe fruit, e.g. banana or cooked apple/pear.</p> <p>Mashed or puréed rice mixed with baby's usual milk to a thin porridge consistency.</p> <p>As your baby progresses try a wider variety of fruits and vegetables, such as avocado and greens.</p> <p>Mashed lentils (dhal), split peas or hummus can be added to vegetables.</p> <p>By 9 months your baby should have one or two servings of egg, tofu or pulses a day alongside breast milk or a minimum of one pint of formula milk. It is useful to include some finger food at this stage, such as cooked vegetables, pieces of fruit, grated cheese, pieces of toast.</p>	<p>Don't add salt, sugar or honey to foods and avoid whole nuts (children under 5 can choke on them).</p> <p>Fruit juice – if you do offer your child fruit juices then always dilute them one part juice to ten parts water and only offer at mealtimes.</p> <p>Eggs – don't give raw or lightly cooked eggs to babies. Eggs can be given to babies over six months but make sure they are thoroughly cooked until both the white and yolk are solid.</p>
<b>9-12 months</b>	<p>Your baby should be able to gradually cope with lumpier foods, such as minced foods rather than mashed or harder finger foods (such as raw fruit and veg).</p> <p>Veggie babies require two servings of split pulses (red lentils, split peas and chick peas), tofu, daily.</p> <p>Fruit and vegetables should be given at mealtimes as the vitamin C helps absorb iron.</p> <p>Full fat dairy products, such as yoghurt and cheese for energy and growth.</p> <p>Quorn™ can be gradually introduced from 9 months by giving small amounts and checking it doesn't cause a reaction, it is a good source of protein. It should be only given occasionally due to its low fat and calorific content.</p>	<p>Too many sweet foods, such as biscuits or cakes, can encourage a sweet tooth and may fill your baby up without providing enough vitamins and minerals.</p>
<b>12 months</b>	<p>Your baby should be enjoying three meals a day.</p> <p>It is not recommended that cow's milk is given as a drink until your baby is at least this age.</p>	<p>Babies under 2 years should not be given semi-skimmed milk, and children under 5 years should not be given skimmed milk. This is due to a lack of fat soluble vitamins (A &amp; D) and fat which children need for energy.</p>

# Important Nutrients for Your Baby

**Please refer to the ‘Complementary Feeding’ table for timings to introduce certain food to your baby.**

## Iron

This is an important nutrient during weaning, as milk is not a rich source of iron. Babies are born with their own store of iron but this will be depleted by six months. Although iron is less easily absorbed from non-animal sources, there are plenty of good vegetable sources. Iron-rich foods suitable for babies over six months include puréed apricots, lentils, cereals, well mashed thin skinned beans and green vegetables. Avoid cereals that are very high in fibre (e.g. wholegrain cereals) as these may inhibit iron absorption. Vitamin C, found in fresh, frozen or juiced fruit and vegetables, aids absorption of iron from plant foods so it helps to give sources of these nutrients in the same meal. A well diluted fruit juice offered with a meal is a good option. Avoid giving tea as this contains tannins that reduce iron absorption.

## Calcium

Breast or formula milk contains all the calcium your baby needs initially. Good sources of calcium for the later weaning stages include cheese, green vegetables, beans, lentils, ground almonds, sesame paste, tofu and bread, (white flour is fortified with calcium so white bread is a good source).

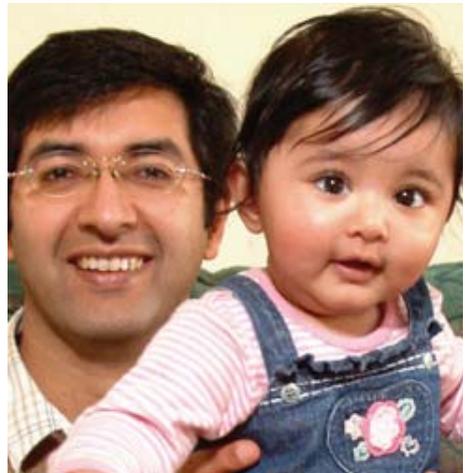
## Protein

As babies are growing rapidly, they require more protein than adults compared to their body weight. Breast or formula milk will

provide the major source of protein for the first eight months. Then choose from beans, lentils, cereals, dairy products, eggs, soya products, nuts, seeds and products such as Quorn™ to add protein into the diet. A variety of foods should be given each day so the baby obtains the right balance of amino acids. For example, if a baby has toast, lentils and yoghurt during a day, that would give a good balance.

## Energy

It is very important to remember that low-fat, healthy eating advice commonly targeted at the adult population is completely inappropriate for babies. Babies between six and 12 months require 700 to 1000kcal a



“ *Kaashvi is a very bonny, cheerful and happy girl who is very inquisitive and is a source of great joy to her family.* ”

*Subahu*

day, so they need concentrated sources of energy. Babies and young children do not have the capacity to eat large quantities of food so they need small, more frequent meals. Their diet should not contain too many foods that are bulky, watery or high in fibre. Make sure your baby has some concentrated energy foods like lentils with vegetable oil, avocado, cheese or smooth nut butter. Adding a quality vegetable oil to other less energy-dense foods is a simple way to increase calorific value. Avoid adding sugar, however, as this could encourage a sweet tooth.

## Vitamin B12

Vitamin B12 is only naturally found in foods of animal origin. Very young babies will get all the vitamin B12 they need from breast or formula or milk. Later, vegetarian babies should obtain enough of this vitamin from dairy products and eggs. However it is particularly important to ensure that vegan babies get vitamin B12 from clearly labelled fortified foods such as soya formula (seek advice from a health professional prior to use), low-salt yeast extract and breakfast cereals.

## Vitamin D

Vitamin D is found in dairy products, eggs and fortified foods like margarine and some breakfast cereals, and can be made by the action of sunlight on the skin. All babies, including vegetarian and vegan, would particularly benefit from a Vitamin D supplement especially if little exposure to sunlight occurs. Your health practitioner will be able to advise you.

## Vitamin drops

From six months the Department of Health advise parents to give their babies vitamin

drops containing vitamins A, C and D – again speak to your health professional for further information.

## Fibre

A diet too high in fibre will fill up a child before their nutritional needs have been met and can interfere with absorption of minerals, such as zinc, iron and calcium. Bran should never be added to a young child's diet – if you think your baby is constipated, give extra fluid such as cooled, boiled water or well diluted fruit juice.

## Milk (as a drink)

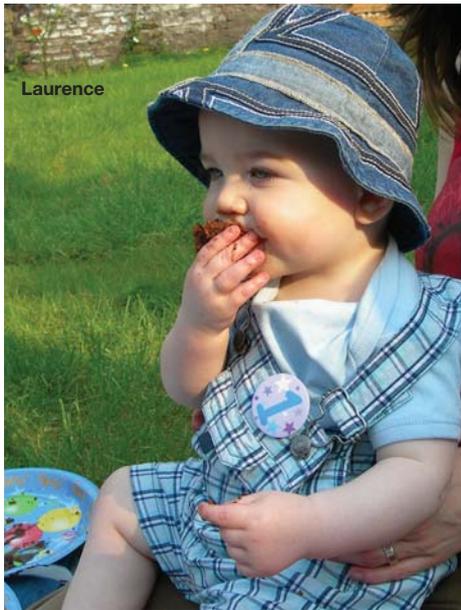
When your baby reaches the age of one year, full fat cow's milk can be introduced as a drink (cow's, sheep and goat's milks are too low in iron and other nutrients to introduce earlier). Soya milks must be specially formulated for babies if they are used instead of breast milk. If avoiding animal milk products, soya formula must be used as a drink up to the age of two years. Please refer to the 'Complementary Feeding' table for further information about cow's milk.

## Milk (in cooking)

Cows and other animal milk can be used in cooking as can regular fortified soya milk.

## Added salt, sugar and honey

Fruit contains sugar and some foods naturally contain sodium e.g. cheese. Added salt and added sugar and honey should all be avoided in the diet of babies and young children. A baby's kidneys are not mature enough to cope with too much salt so it is important to ensure your baby consumes less than 1g of salt a day. Don't forget that many processed foods not specifically made for babies are high in



Laurence

“ We puréed everything for our first child but with number two we were much more relaxed. Orla had several teeth at six months and really enjoyed feeding herself with big chunks of cooked veg, bread, fruit, cheese and even tofu. She’s still a pretty messy eater but she’s very confident and enjoys a really wide range of tastes and textures. ”

Liz

salt, so always read the label. Sugary foods and drinks are a prime cause of tooth decay if consumed frequently between meals. It is important to avoid introducing honey into your baby’s diet before 12 months, because it may contain a bacterium that affects immature intestines. Remember all the family may well benefit by reducing their salt and sugar intake.

## Nuts

Whole or chopped nuts and seeds are not suitable for children under five because of the danger of choking, but they can be used if finely ground, for example in cooking or smooth nut spread. Long-standing official advice until very recently has been to avoid peanuts in a child’s diet if the mother, father or any previous children have a history of hay fever, asthma, eczema or other allergies. However in August 2009 the Department of Health relaxed its stance considerably, now simply encouraging mothers with a history of allergies in their family to talk to their GP, health visitor or medical allergy specialist before giving peanuts to the child for the first time.

## Quorn™ and processed soya/gluten-based products

Quorn™ products are a useful addition to the diet of children, but should not be relied on as the sole or major source of protein since they are relatively low in calories and high in fibre so may satisfy the child’s appetite before they have taken in enough energy. Textured vegetable protein and similar products may be difficult for young babies to digest, and some products can be relatively high in salt, but small amounts can be introduced from around nine months.

**Children who consume well-planned vegetarian diets should be able to achieve all their nutritional requirements for growth.**

**British Dietetic Association 1995**

## Opposition from family and friends

*“My parents obviously found the idea of us bringing our kids up veggie a bit difficult but they would never actually come out with it so it was hard to ‘put them right’. Laurence is four now and he’s the one who actually talks about the issues, asking his grandparents every so often, ‘why do you eat animals?’ They don’t say much in return but they’re eating less and less meat so perhaps he is having an influence!” Joe*

*“My in-laws never really said anything, but I felt the need to tell them what I was feeding Josie and why. I bought a wall chart (food groups and where you find protein etc.) and have it on my kitchen wall, to refer to, which I showed my mother in law. I think it educated her on certain food groups and where you get nutrients etc. and made her realise I knew my stuff and that Josie would be healthy.” Georgia*

You may find some relatives are reluctant to accept that a vegetarian diet is best for your baby, but it is now widely recognised by bodies such as the British Medical Association and the Department of Health that a vegetarian diet can provide all the nutrients needed for growing infants. The Vegetarian Society is more than happy to provide fully referenced scientific evidence that such a diet is perfectly safe and, indeed, healthy.

## Further nutritional information

The Vegetarian Society can provide more detailed information on all aspects of this booklet free of charge – just call us on 0161 925 2000 or visit [www.vegsoc.org](http://www.vegsoc.org)

### Recipes

The following books are all endorsed by the Vegetarian Society, and contain a large variety of recipes for babies and young children, together with basic nutritional advice.

*Great Healthy Food for Vegetarian Kids*, Nicola Graimes

*Veggie Food for Kids*, Sara Lewis

*Rose Elliot’s Mother, Baby & Toddler Book*, Rose Elliot

We also have a free booklet called Veggie Kids Kitchen – just call 0161 925 2000 for a copy.

**The Vegetarian Society would like to thank the British Nutrition Foundation (BNF) for reviewing the contents of this booklet.**

**To find out more about the BNF please visit [www.nutrition.org.uk](http://www.nutrition.org.uk)**

## References and useful information sites

### **General Pregnancy**

NCT Pregnancy and birth line – 0300 33 00 772

### **Breastfeeding**

NCT Breastfeeding support (to reach a trained breastfeeding councillor in your local area)  
0300 33 00 771

La Leche League – peer support from breastfeeding mothers [www.laleche.org.uk](http://www.laleche.org.uk)

### **Birth to 5: 2007 Edition**

[www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_074924](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_074924)

### **British Nutrition Foundation – nutrition for all stages**

[www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving/lifestages/trying-for-a-baby](http://www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving/lifestages/trying-for-a-baby)

[www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving/lifestages/pregnancy](http://www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving/lifestages/pregnancy)

[www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving/lifestages/feeding-your-baby](http://www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving/lifestages/feeding-your-baby)

[www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving/lifestages/feeding-your-toddlerpre-school-child](http://www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving/lifestages/feeding-your-toddlerpre-school-child)

### **Children and Babies (Quorn)**

[www.eatwell.gov.uk/asksam/agesandstages/childrenandbabies/](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/asksam/agesandstages/childrenandbabies/)

### **Early life nutrition and lifelong health**

British Medical Association. February 2009

### **Feeding your baby in the first year**

[www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication/yourbaby0808.pdf](http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication/yourbaby0808.pdf)

### **Food Standards Agency – When you're pregnant**

[www.eatwell.gov.uk/agesandstages/pregnancy/whenyrpregnant/](http://www.eatwell.gov.uk/agesandstages/pregnancy/whenyrpregnant/)

### **Revised Government advice on consumption of peanut during pregnancy, breastfeeding, and early life and development of peanut allergy\***

[www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/Children/Maternity/Maternalandinfantnutrition/DH\\_104490](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/Children/Maternity/Maternalandinfantnutrition/DH_104490)

# THE VEGETARIAN SOCIETY

Established in 1847, the Vegetarian Society is a national charity that promotes awareness and respect for vegetarian lifestyles through education and support.

- ✓ The Charity works across the community – with individuals, schools, colleges, government, media and industry.
- ✓ We provide expert advice on diet and nutrition, and information for food producers, enabling them to meet the needs of vegetarians with integrity.
- ✓ We also keep vegetarianism in the news and feed the real facts to the press.
- ✓ The work of the Vegetarian Society helps keep the standard of vegetarian food high – we help caterers offer vegetarians real choice.
- ✓ We give vegetarians a louder, stronger voice.

The Vegetarian Society relies on supporters to fund its valuable work, and thanks to them we've been able to make a huge difference to the lives of millions of vegetarians. There's still plenty of work to be done but we can't do it without you – by joining the Vegetarian Society you can help us create a better vegetarian future for your children.

Adult supporters:

- receive a glossy quarterly magazine
- enjoy discounts in hundreds of veggie friendly shops and cafés
- gain access to our telephone information service
- receive a lapel badge and a window sticker

We also have two great youth clubs: the Twiggy Club is for members aged ten and under and Team Veggie is for members aged 11 to 16. Young supporters receive:

- their own welcome pack with a membership card
- keyring with the club's logo
- cookery booklet and stickers
- Twiggy Club members will also receive the exclusive quarterly Twiggy newsletter and Activity Booklet, while older members will receive our quarterly magazine The Vegetarian, poster and Team Veggie e-newsletter.

To join call 0161 925 2000, visit [www.vegsoc.org/members](http://www.vegsoc.org/members) or email [membership@vegsoc.org](mailto:membership@vegsoc.org)

If you are already a supporter why not buy someone special the gift of membership to the Vegetarian Society? You can also request we send out our specially designed gift card, along with a personal message.



**The Vegetarian Society** Parkdale, Dunham Road, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 4QG

Registered Charity No. 259358 Registered Company No. 959115

Patrons: Rose Elliot MBE, Jerome Flynn, Mary McCartney, Sir Paul McCartney, Stella McCartney, Wendy Turner Webster

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