

PREGNANCY — THE NATURAL WAY

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A VEGETARIAN PREGNANCY

Matt Ronan says that vegetarians can be just as healthy as meat-eaters during pregnancy:

"Vegetarian diets tend to be lower in saturated fat and higher in fibre, beta-carotene, folic acid, vitamins C and E and magnesium. However, they usually contain lower levels of some key nutrients such as protein, omega 3 fatty acids, vitamin B12, iron and zinc.

"You can get all the essential amino acids you need by eating a mixture of different cereals, peas, beans, lentils, seeds and nuts. If you eat dairy foods and eggs too, then there is really no need to worry. Quinoa and goji berries are complete proteins like meat and excellent as part of a varied diet. To improve the fatty acid content of your diet switch from sunflower oil or other oils to rapeseed oil. Other excellent food sources include chia seeds, avocado, walnuts and flaxseed oil.

"When it comes to vitamins and minerals, a lack of iron is the most likely problem for vegetarians. You have a greater risk of becoming anaemic, so it's important to eat plenty of iron-rich foods including quinoa, dried fruit, green leafy vegetables and wholegrains.

"Vitamin B12 is another one to watch. Many vegetarian dairy

alternatives such as rice milk and soya products are also fortified with calcium and Vitamin B12. It is also naturally found in seaweed and yeast extract.

"Vegans need to choose soya or rice milk fortified with calcium and vitamins, orange juice with added calcium and fortified veggie burger mixes and breakfast cereals. A vitamin D supplement is recommended for all pregnant women but it is particularly important for vegans. You may also choose to take a general multivitamin supplement."

NATURAL HELP DURING PREGNANCY

Omega 3s – According to Dr Keri Marshall, a licenced naturopathic doctor who specialises in paediatrics and is Chief Medical Officer of Nordic Naturals, "Omega-3 fats like docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), play a unique role in pregnancy because of the rapid development of new cells, tissues and organ systems in a developing foetus that require these fats for optimal development. In addition maternal levels of omega-3s, which developing infants rely on for their own nutrition, decrease during pregnancy. A quality fish oil supplement that has been purified and tested for heavy metals and other contaminants will ensure you

are getting enough omega-3s at a time when you might be concerned about the mercury content in fish, which is a natural dietary source of preformed omega-3s."

Calcium – important for avoiding leg cramps. Either take more calcium in your diet in the form of yoghurt, milk, cheese and sardines or a supplement.

Folic acid – essential for all pregnant women.

Prune juice – good for constipation. Sip prune juice, drink an extra glass of water morning and night, eat an extra portion of fruit and vegetables and try a high-fibre breakfast cereal.

Vitamin B6 – to stave off morning sickness. Also, cut down on fatty foods, eat slow-release carbohydrates rather than quick release ones, walk for ten minutes to ease nausea and drink ginger tea.

Vitamin C – keeps your veins elastic and so is good for varicose veins. Put your legs up above your hips when relaxing, sleep with a pillow under your feet, wear support tights, walk 20 minutes per day, don't wear heels and flex your ankles when standing or sitting for any period of time.

NATURAL THERAPIES

■ **Reflexology** – good for backache and morning sickness. For more information on reflexology see page 20. Follow a practitioner's advice as not recommended for women in the first trimester (three months).

■ **Aromatherapy** – good for relaxation and lower back pain, but only if you consult a qualified practitioner as oils can be very potent.

■ **Acupuncture** – can be good for common problems such as sickness, constipation, heartburn and backache. Always inform the practitioner you are pregnant because there are acupoints they will not want to stimulate during pregnancy.

■ **Hypnotherapy** – good for psychological issues such as needle phobia and fear of childbirth. Always consult a fully qualified, registered hypnotherapist.