

Can't Get Pregnant? Try a Vegan Diet

by Iva Keene MRMed. ND. - Natural Fertility Specialist - Thursday, July 01, 2010

<https://natural-fertility-prescription.com/cant-get-pregnant-vegan-diet/>

Perhaps you're wondering — is a vegan diet good for fertility? Since it's not as invasive and scary as conventional fertility treatments, lifestyle changes like forgoing meat and going on a plant-based fertility diet may be a more suitable option when it comes to trying to conceive. If you can't get pregnant on a regular meat-based diet, this article is for you.

Can a Plant-Based Diet Help Fertility?

The cat's out of the bag! After decades of meat and dairy propaganda, vegetables and fruit have been given the praise they deserve. Full of antioxidants, phytonutrients, fiber, water, minerals and vitamins — how could they not? But really, is a vegan diet good for fertility? You may have heard that vegetarians and vegans have lower rates of cancer^[1], diabetes^[2], heart disease and obesity. But what about infertility? According to a recent Harvard study, eating more fruit and vegetables in place of meat increases fertility^[3]! Susan Levin, director of nutrition education at the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine says "It's no surprise to me that you're going to find it [vegan diet] leads to less infertility".

'Vegetarian' and 'Vegan: What's the Difference?

While vegetarian and vegan may seem identical to most people, these are two different things. It may seem confusing, but the secret lies in dairy and eggs. Vegetarians eat eggs and dairy but vegans don't. Both vegetarian and vegan diets consist of fruit, vegetables, nuts, seeds, nut and seed oils, grains and legumes. However, there are no animal products in a vegan diet. This means no dairy, no eggs, no meat and no fish for vegans!

What Not to Eat When Trying to Conceive: How Can Meat, Eggs and Dairy Be Bad for You?

For decades, we've been hearing about the importance of meat and fish three times a week, an egg a day and a glass of milk. And yes, it's true that these foods contain complete protein, vitamin D, iron, B12, calcium and lots of other nutrients. Having said so, how can they be bad when you're trying to get pregnant?

1. Insulin Resistance

In addition to the beneficial nutrients, animal products contain saturated fat which is a perfect storage place for environmental toxins, pesticides, dioxins and hormones. Unfortunately, saturated fat and insulin resistance go hand in hand. And when it comes to fertility, [insulin resistance can be a real problem](#) — just take a look at these:

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- Interferes with reproductive hormones and ovulation, insulin resistance creates hormone imbalance in your body.
- Insulin resistance is one of the hallmarks of PCOS, the leading cause of infertility today.
- With insulin resistance, you'll find it hard to conceive as a result of lack of ovulation (or very irregular ovulation) and poor egg quality.

2. Acidity

Animal products predispose your body to acidity. While an acidic body may seem normal on the outside, it makes a perfect feeding and breeding ground for bacteria and other pathogens. And when your body gets infected by pathogens, you are increasing your risk for miscarriage^[4]. According to one study, while the mechanism of infection in causing miscarriage is still unknown, increased miscarriage risk is associated with several kinds of infections. Since it makes you more prone to infections, an acidic body also increases your immune activity and saps available energy from your reproductive system. And when your body redirects energy from the reproductive system, you may find it more difficult to conceive. An immune system on high alert can harm sperm and developing embryos. Calcium, a crucial nutrient for egg and sperm health is gravely affected when the body is acidic. An over-acidic body will leach calcium out of your bones to neutralize the acidity. This, in turn, leaves your calcium stores depleted which is undesirable when you're trying to conceive.

Is It Safe to Continue With a Vegan Diet While Pregnant?

The short answer is yes. The American Dietetic Association recently revised their position about vegan and vegetarian diets during pregnancy stating that they are safe. However, when on a vegan diet, you have to make sure that you're making healthy choices when it comes to food to maximize its health benefits.

A Word of Caution

There are many unhealthy vegans and vegetarians out there too. Eating pasta and bread with vegetables (and copious amounts of cheese for vegetarians) every day does not make up a healthy diet! I've seen many cases of unhealthy vegetarians in my practice over the years.

Six Simple Rules to Get Pregnant on a Vegan Diet

However, if you can't get pregnant on a regular meat and three veg diet, you should consider a healthy vegan diet. To be a healthy vegan you need to pay attention to your nutrient intake. To help you maximize the fertility benefits of going on a vegan fertility diet, you need to follow six simple rules:

1. Combine Your Protein Sources.

No vegetable protein source contains all the essential amino acids. Therefore you need to combine them. Combining grains with nuts and seeds, or legumes make up complete protein. You need to ensure that every day you consume some legumes, grains, nuts and seeds.

2. Supplement With Vitamin B12.

To date, **no vegetable source of usable B12 has been found**^[5]. This is a crucial vitamin you mustn't become deficient in — a vitamin B12 deficiency is associated with cardiovascular disease, neurological deficits, miscarriage and infertility^[6]. The solution – B12 supplements or injections. Unfortunately, that's the name of the game, if you want to be vegan you need to supplement with B12. However, don't fret — it takes years before a deficiency can develop and you only require minute amounts. A good quality prenatal vitamin will cover your B12 requirements. And there are many vegan products enriched with B12. If you become a veteran vegan, have your B12 levels checked from time to time to make sure you're not deficient – yes even if you supplement every day – better safe than sorry!

3. Eat Iron-Rich Foods

Since you can get the most iron in red meat, going vegan may make you iron-deficient. The good news is vegans and vegetarians with a well planned and balanced diet have no higher incidence of iron deficiency and anemia than meat-eaters. Because iron is also available in plant sources, you can load up on iron-rich foods like avocados, prunes, apricots, lentils, black beans, almonds, chickpeas and wheat germ.

4. Make Sure You Get Some Sun.

As no vegetable source contains it, vitamin D is another concern for vegans. What's the best source of vitamin D – the sun! Ten minutes of sun on your skin a day will give you all the vitamin D you need. Just make sure to avoid the hottest time of the day and that you are not wearing sunscreen. Early morning and late afternoon are the best time to get your dose of vitamin D without getting burned.

5. Eat Organic!

If you are going to exclude animal products which are the richest source of [pesticides in our diet](#), you don't want to reintroduce them by eating sprayed fruit and vegetables. By going vegan, you will notice that you are saving a lot of money too since meat is expensive. With this surplus of cash, you can now afford to eat organic fruit, vegetables, grains, legumes, nuts and seeds.

6. Don't Go Overboard on Soy!

Studies show that soy does not impact fertility on fertile couples. However infertile couples need to be cautious with soy. If you are going to consume soy and you want to get pregnant, make sure it's **GMO-free, organic, made from whole soybeans and fermented**. The only truly safe soy product is tempeh. Tofu in small amounts and not every day is OK too.

Vegan Pregnancy: Other Things to Consider

Like I said earlier, you can be a vegan but still be unhealthy. And since there's no best vegan food for fertility, you have to make sure you're always choosing healthily. Here are other things you need to consider when going vegan to improve your fertility:

Reduce Intake of Fertility-Harming Foods

Not all non-meat sources are ideal for fertility, so you have to reduce your intake of (or eliminate) alcohol, refined foods, [caffeine](#), sugar and flour in your diet. Sugar and flour, for instance, predispose you to insulin resistance and hormonal imbalance which make it more difficult for you to conceive.

Beware of Nutrient Deficiencies

Since you're on a plant-based diet, you have to watch out for possible nutrient deficiencies in the diet. Nutrients like omega 3 and zinc, which are necessary for maintaining egg and sperm health, are not readily available in the diet. Besides iron and vitamin B12, you have to supplement these too.

Eat a Rainbow

When you decide to do a vegan diet to improve fertility, include as many different fruits and vegetables as you can to ensure you're getting most of the nutrients you need from what you eat. A good way to make sure of this is to eat a rainbow — **include different colored fruits and veggies each meal.**

Consult a Natural Fertility Doctor

When trying to conceive, it is essential to seek personalized professional help from a natural fertility doctor. Having a qualified naturopathic physician to assess what you need from a nutritional standpoint will be very helpful in your fertility journey.

What to Do?

Now take a trip to your nearest organic store and explore the vegan food options to get pregnant! The switch to a vegan diet may not only improve your fertility but also make you shed the excess weight, clear your skin and brighten your eyes! What are your thoughts? Are you a vegan or vegetarian already? If you can't get pregnant on a regular diet would you give the vegan diet a go? Do you think a vegan diet can help you get pregnant?

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