

Is a vegan diet OK during pregnancy?

[Kriti Saraswat](#) December 18, 2013 at 9:15 pm



Hollywood actress Olivia Wilde who is engaged to Jason Sudeikis was in the news for being pregnant with her first baby. Incidentally, Wilde was named People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals's (PETA) sexiest vegetarian celebrity in 2010. The actress who has been a vegan for the past five years has decided to revert to meat through her pregnancy. The news of her tuning a meat-eater again has put the vegan diet under the scanner, raising questions about its suitability for a pregnant woman. We spoke to nutritionist at PETA India [Bhuvaneshwari Gupta](#), and founder of SHARAN [Dr Nandita Shah](#) about the same.

Is it safe to follow a vegan diet during pregnancy?

Dr Shah says, 'Not only is it safe to be a vegan during pregnancy, if vitamin B12 and D are looked after, but the IQ of the child is also likely to be higher due to the high intake of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients in this food. Pregnant women should eat plenty of fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds. They should avoid refined and processed foods as well as animal products. Like every animal on the planet, if humans eat and live the way nature designed us to, we will have normal pregnancies and excellent health.' (Read: [10 diet dos and don'ts during pregnancy](#))

Nutritionist Gupta who advocates following a vegan lifestyle and is currently pregnant believes that a vegan diet is not only safe, but is also a healthier choice for pregnant women. According to her, it is the best choice for her and her baby's health.

The deal with a vegan lifestyle is to include healthy, wholesome foods in your diet in order to live a fit and healthy life. Since pregnant women need more calories and energy, they need to ensure essential nutrients in their diet. It is important to eat foods that are rich in nutrients, but not high in fat or sugar. She says, 'Pregnant vegan women already take a step towards safe pregnancy by avoiding dairy and meat products that are high in animal fats and are also highly prone to bacterial contamination.'

'Pregnant women who eat fish don't just risk their own health—they also jeopardise the health of their unborn baby. PCBs, mercury, and other toxins found in fish can be passed on to nursing babies through a mother's breast milk. 'Researchers from Wayne State University found that women who regularly ate fish, even many years before becoming pregnant, were more likely to have babies who were sluggish at birth, had small head circumferences, and had developmental problems.'

Here is a sample meal plan you can follow:

Start your day with fresh fruits or a green smoothie (with fresh fruits and greens). Follow it up with herbal tea and any of these options:

- Whole grain vegetable sandwich with peanut butter
- [Poha](#) or vegetable dalia with a glass of soy milk
- Scrambled tofu with a multigrain toast
- Whole grain cereal with fortified soy milk and fruits
- Vegetable or dal paranthas with soy or peanut curd
- Idli/dosa with vegetable sambar

For lunch and dinner, choose from the following:

- A salad with tahini dressing, some vegetables and beans with a grain of your choice
- Palak rotis with lentils and mixed vegetable subzi
- Hummus with a bowl of leafy green salad and whole bread
- Tofu brown rice with seasoned vegetables
- Soy or peanut curd with vegetable or lentil stuffed rotis

- Mashed potatoes made with soy milk, sautéed spinach and vegetable salad
- Mock chicken Thai curry with brown rice and green salad

In the evening, snack on:

- Nuts/sprout chat/alu chat/fruits
- High protein snacks like roasted chana, peanut chikki, dhoklas or even dal wadas
- Fruits smoothies with soy milk
- Crackers with hummus
- Dates

Due to our lifestyles, we are hardly outdoors and most of our time is spent indoors without any possibility of sunlight. This has made many people deficient in vitamin D. Get yourself tested and if needed, take adequate supplements for it. Pregnancy is a wonderful experience so enjoy it to the fullest and give birth to a healthy baby by eating right. (Read: [5 yummy pregnancy recipes](#))

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