

# Ask Anya



**Anya Todd is a vegan registered and licensed dietitian who graduated from Case Western Reserve University and completed her internship at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation. Though she has no plans to become pregnant, Anya has been known to raid the discounted maternity clothes rack at Target and have odd cravings for pickles and soy ice cream.**



Most pregnant women become very concerned about weight gain. You have a baby growing inside of you. You need to gain some weight in order to sustain it! Weight gain recommendations vary depending upon your pre-pregnancy weight. If you were in a normal weight range before expecting, a 25-35 lb gain is appropriate; underweight, a 28-40 lb gain; and overweight, a 15-25 lb gain is ideal. To curb excessive weight gain, avoid high fat, high sugar foods and opt for high fiber foods such as fresh produce and whole grains.

## **Q:** Are there nutritional concerns for a vegan during pregnancy?

**A:** Well, if you believed all the media's negative press with regards to a vegan diet in the past few years, I could understand your concern. The press I am referring to involves a few cases in which parents neglected their children by way of malnourishment and then used their vegan diet as their defense. This led to a widespread concern that veganism is inadequate in meeting the nutritional needs of pregnant women and infants. However, science and proper planning state otherwise.

Your nutritional needs definitely increase while carrying that little bun in the oven. For starters, you want to eat enough nutrient-dense calories to sustain your baby's growth. Everyone's calorie needs are different; however, the general consensus is that you will need an extra 300 calories per day while pregnant, which is not that much food. A slice of whole-grain bread and two tablespoons of almond butter equal 300 calories, as does an afternoon snack of a bag of Sour Patch Kids washed down with a can of soda — but you want the most nutritional “bang for your buck,” so toast and almond butter it is.

Speaking of almond butter, it is also an excellent source of protein. Surprisingly, your protein needs do not increase substantially during pregnancy — only by about 10 grams per day. Again, a nutrient-dense well-varied diet that includes legumes, nuts, and whole grains will easily meet your new protein requirement.

## **Choosing a well-varied diet with emphasis on fresh, whole foods will provide you and your baby with the necessary nourishment.**

Exercise is important even when pregnant. Of course, you should consult your health care professional to discuss appropriate exercises before beginning a new routine. Women who exercise while pregnant note less constipation, more energy, and easier deliveries. No one wants to be around a constipated grump, so take advantage of all the fashionable maternity workout apparel and get to the gym.

Getting back to specific nutrients, there are some that are more important than others while pregnant. Calcium, surprisingly, is not as much of a concern as you would think. During pregnancy, your body's ability to absorb this mineral becomes more efficient. Aim for 1,000 mg per day, which is easily obtained from three daily servings of calcium-rich foods, including fortified non-dairy beverages and juices, calcium processed tofu and blackstrap molasses.