



## A STUDY OF VEGETARIAN AND NON-VEGETARIAN DIET IN PREGNANCY

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### ABSTRACT

*Pregnancy is a unique period for a woman. Where the mother experiences many physiological and psychological changes during and after pregnancy. To overcome these changes a in a healthier way woman's nutritional status plays a direct role and also pregnancy outcome depends on maternal nutrition. The malnutrition during pregnancy may produce many preterm and post term complications. A vegetarian diet has its own pros and cons and Non-veg foods surely have their disadvantages but there is some important advantages too. Vegetarian and Non vegetarian diet has their own several impacts in pregnancy. This paper briefly surveys the pros and cons of both these diets and their impact in pregnancy.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Pregnancy, Diet, Vegetarian, Non-Vegetarian.*

### INTRODUCTION:

Since Hippocrates, whose famous aphorism declared 'Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food', diet has been key for health.<sup>1</sup>The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics recommends the following key components of a healthy lifestyle during pregnancy appropriate weight gain, eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, and appropriate and timely vitamin and mineral supplementation.

Approximately 300 extra calories are needed daily to maintain a healthy pregnancy. These calories should come from a balanced diet of protein, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, with sweets and fats kept to a minimum. A healthy, well-balanced diet during pregnancy can also help to minimize some pregnancy symptoms such as nausea and constipation. Most pregnant woman wants to know the best foods to eat and what to avoid<sup>2</sup>.

Normally a Vegetarian food enhances our energy levels, establish a good digestion power, and maintain water levels. The diet is rich in antioxidants, minerals and vitamins hence this helps us in building a better immune system.

Vegetarian Pregnancy may be increasing the risk of their children becoming addicted drugs because they could lack vitamin B12 in their diet while the child is developing, new research suggests. The study from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism found that teens whose mothers didn't eat meat while they were pregnant were more likely to experience substance abuse.

### ESSENTIAL NUTRITIONAL REQUIREMENTS IN PREGNANCY:

**Iron:** Iron needs are much higher than usual in pregnancy because of the increase in the volume of the mother's blood and because of blood formed for the baby. Iron supplements of 30 milligrams daily during the second and third trimesters are commonly recommended.

**Protein:** Current recommendations for protein in pregnancy are about 60 grams per day. Protein helps to build up baby's soft tissue, the placenta and red blood cells. It also helps form hair, nails, bones and organs. A meta-analysis of 20 separate research trials found that protein intake was directly related to birth weight.

**Calcium and Vitamin D:** Both calcium and vitamin D are needed for the development of the baby's bones and teeth. Calcium intakes of 1200 milligrams daily are recommended for women. The National Academy of Sciences recommends that a vitamin D supplement of 10 micrograms (400 IU) daily be taken by pregnant vegans who live at northern latitudes in the winter and by those with minimal exposure to sunlight.

**Vitamin B-12:** This plays an important role in the developing fetus. Also in breastfeeding, it's essential.

**Folic Acid:** Folic acid has recently been in the news because of its connection with a type of birth defect called neural tube defect. Studies have shown that women who have infants with neural tube defect have lower intakes of folate and lower blood folate levels than other women. Folic acid is needed early in pregnancy (before many women know they are pregnant) for normal neural tube development.

As the above said requirements are very essential during and after pregnancy it is abundantly available in non-vegetarian diet than in vegetarian diet. Hence there is always a query with type of diet in pregnancy.

#### VEGETARIANISM IN PREGNANCY:

Vegan diets are defined as diets without animal or animal-derived food. Vegetarian diets include animal-derived food: eggs, honey, milk, and dairy products.

#### Pros:

- Recent studies indicate that nutritional patterns enriched with plant-derived foods might be protective during pregnancy, conferring beneficial effects to both mothers and their offspring.
- **Anti-Oxidants:** Green leafy vegetables, fruits, nuts and herbs tend to have medicinal properties and are rich in antioxidants. Work of Antioxidants is to fix the free radicals and throw them out of your body to prevent you from many diseases and disorders.
- **Folic Acid:** Many vegan foods dried beans; tofu, green leafy vegetables; and orange juice are good sources of folic acid.
- **Minerals and Vitamins:** Plant-based diet is much higher in minerals and vitamin contents. Soy milk, Soybeans, and fortified cereals have sufficient amounts of Vitamin B12.
- **Water:** Plant-based diet is rich in water. Consuming fresh fruits and vegetable help in completing the total per day water requirement as well. Sufficient calories:
- **High in Fiber:** All the plant-based foods, be it cereals, pulses, fruits, vegetables or nuts are full of fiber. Fiber provides bulk and helps in passing stools easily. Fiber also cleans our digestion system. Taking fiber insufficient fiber in the daily diet can result in digestive system disorders such as colon cancer, indigestion, acidity, constipation and loss of appetite<sup>3</sup>.
- **Weight Gain:** Weight gain during pregnancy has a marked impact on the baby's size and health at birth. Many vegans begin pregnancy on the slim side and may gain weight very slowly and required.

#### Cons:

- Some vegetarians experience B12 deficiency while pregnant, "Among Western populations infants of vitamin B12 deficient mothers have poor brain growth, developmental regression, irritability, thrive poorly and demonstrate residual deficits in cognitive and social development,"
- Maternal consumption of a plant-based diet during pregnancy is associated with birth weight. Among white Europeans, a plant-based diet is associated with lower birth weight.<sup>4</sup>
- Although vegetarians can consume protein through legumes and nuts, these protein sources are incomplete. A complete protein contains the essential amino acids that your body needs, and animal products provide a complete protein.

### Non Vegetarianism in Pregnancy:

#### Pros:

- **Protein:** A non-vegetarian diet which primarily includes meat, fish, eggs and dairy food is a good source of protein.
- **Vitamin B 12:** Vitamin B 12 and iron found in meat, fish, eggs and milk are in abundance. It is very important for the formation of red blood cells and nerve fibres. If our bodies do not produce enough red blood cells it can lead to iron deficiency known as anemia. The deficiency of iron or vitamin B 12 can result in fatigue. Many animal products are also high in iron and vitamin B12.
- Iron has two forms -- heme and non heme; the former is found in animal products and is easier for your body to absorb<sup>5</sup>.
- **Fitness: Meat,** chicken and fish along with eggs, protects our body from the excessive cold weather during winters. Eggs and fish provide us the essential vitamins, proteins, nutrients and minerals that are good for your overall health.
- **Enhanced wisdom-** According to the medical science, a diet constituting of sea food like fish and eggs sharpen our intellect and promote the smooth functioning of our brain. This ultimately accelerates our wisdom. <sup>6</sup>

#### Cons

- The way of farming of the animals that are consumed as major non-veg items are often unhygienic. The farms not only use low quality food to feed the livestock's but often feed them foods that are high in antibiotic content, in order to keep the cattle's disease free. These antibiotics can pass on to the body of the meat eaters easily, resulting into antibiotic resistance in the body which can be highly harmful during pregnancy.
- On the contrary red meat and chicken increase the toxicity in the human body.
- Non-vegetarian foods mostly lack in fibers results in acidity & constipation in pregnancy.
- A non-vegetarian diet may provide extra calories leading to obesity.
- Consumption of high amount of non-veg foods, particularly red meat, can also work as one of the primary reasons for an increased blood pressure and may result in primary hypertension.

### CONCLUSION

"We are what we eat". Every food we take has impact on body, mind and soul. So being cautious in what we eat, how we eat, how much we eat is very essential during pregnancy. Vegetarian and Non vegetarian diet both has their own pros and cons. so it's in the individual decision to take which type of diet during pregnancy. This paper is to emphasize food plays a major role in healthier pregnancy. And it also gives awareness through scientific research studies about diet consciousness in pregnancy.

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