

Vegan Pregnancy

HAPŪTANGA WHĒKANA

VEGAN^{NZ}
SOCIETY
TE ROPŪ WHĒKANA O AOTEAROA

Pai mutunga and congratulations!

Being hapū/pregnant is an exciting time as you nurture and grow your pēpi/baby.

Eating well while during hapūtanga is important for the long-term health of mum and pēpi.

A vegan diet can meet your nutritional requirements, provided you eat a wide selection of kai/foods from all the right food groups and supplement with key nutrients. For optimal nutrition we should be eating mostly minimally processed kai and limiting fat, sugar and highly processed kai.

The starting point for planning your diet is to make sure you eat enough kai from each of the following food groups/ngā whakarōpūtanga kai.

**Grains, Cereals
& Starchy Veg (cooked)**
Pata, Huapata, Māngaro

8+ servings
a day

Fluids

Ngā Momo Inu
8+ cups or at
least 2 L a day



Dairy Alternatives
Ngā momo miraka anō
2-3 servings
(fortified) a day

Plant Protein
Pūmua tipu

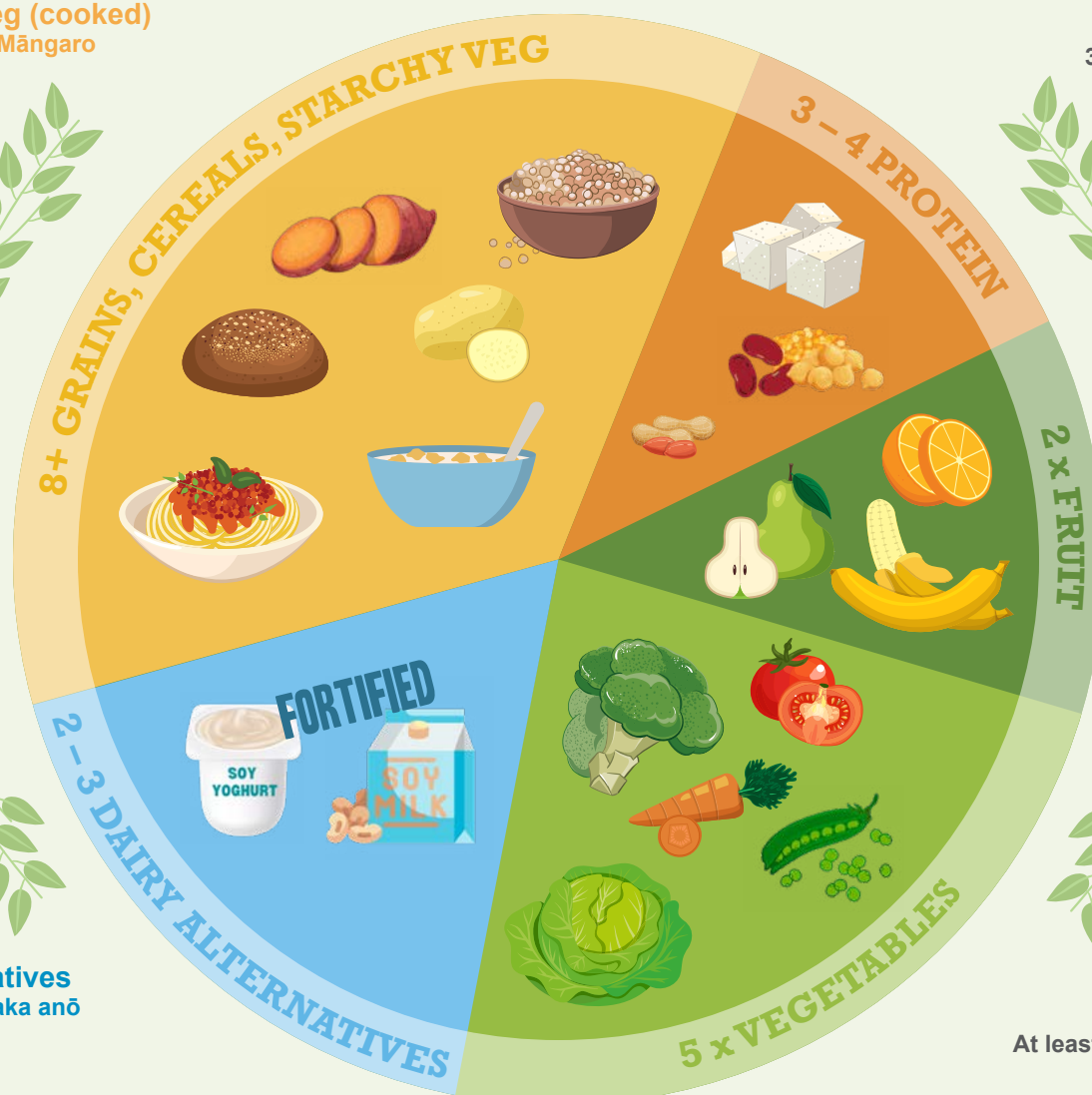
3-4 servings a day

Fruit
Ngā huarākau

At least 2
servings a day

Vegetables
Ngā huawhenua

At least 5 servings a day



Food Groups Ngā rōpū kai

Grains, cereals & starchy veg Witi me pata

These are a great source of energy, carbohydrates and fibre, as well as some protein.

Choose whole grains for extra fibre, vitamins and minerals. Aim for 8+ serves/day.

A serving = 1 slice of bread, ½ cup cooked pasta, rice or cereal, 1 medium potato, ½ cup kumara.



Protein-rich foods Kai Pūmua

Getting sufficient protein is essential for the growth of pepi. Aim for 3-4 servings of protein-rich kai including beans, tofu, lentils and legumes.

Besides protein this kai also provides iron, zinc and other nutrients important for you and your pepi.

A serving = 1 cup cooked legumes / 170g tofu / 30g nuts/seeds / 1 vegetarian sausage or burger.



Calcium fortified dairy-alternatives Ngā momo miraka anō

Choose a fortified plant-based milk / miraka. It should provide at least 100mg calcium/100ml as well as other nutrients e.g. Vitamin D. Fortified soy milk is preferable as it is also a good source of protein. Aim for 2-3 servings per day.

Coconut yoghurt and non-dairy cheese are low in protein and calcium and do not count towards your dairy-alternative serves.

A serving = 1 cup fortified plant-based milk / 200ml soy yoghurt. Some brands of tofu are also a good source



A word about food safety Haumarutanga Kai

During hapūtanga your immunity is lowered so you're more susceptible to food-borne diseases which could harm you and pepi. Make sure to practice good hand hygiene and follow food safety principles around washing, cooking and refrigeration. Unsafe kai (increasing risk of listeria) include:

- Tahini, and dips containing tahini, including hummus
- Pre-prepared salads including rice and pasta salad, and fruit salad
- Store bought sushi (if home-made eat immediately)
- Fermented foods
- Raw sprouts, raw and field mushrooms
- Frozen berries (uncooked)
- Any kai past the use-by date.

For more information see:
www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety-home/food-pregnancy/list-safe-food-pregnancy

Vegetables Ngā huawhenua



Eating a variety of different huawhenua/vegetables will help ensure you and pepi are getting plenty of vitamins, minerals and fibre.

Aim for at least 5 servings of huawhenua daily, which should include dark green leafy vegetables, as well as other brightly coloured vegetables (carrot, capsicums, pumpkin, beetroots etc.)

A serving = ½ cup of cooked veg / 1 cup of raw vegetables.

It is important to wash all vegetables well before eating.

Fruit Ngā huarākau



Include at least 2 servings fresh fruit /ngā huarākau daily. It is important to wash all fruit before eating.

A serving = 1 medium fruit / ½ cup of fruit salad

Fats and oils Ngako ora



For better health and to avoid excess weight gain it is best to avoid fried foods and high fat processed foods. If using oil in cooking, use olive or canola oil and use sparingly. Avoid coconut oil and solid fats.

Omega-3 fatty acids are essential for the pepi's brain development, and a lack of DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) may increase the risk of preterm birth. Ground linseed, flax oil, chia seeds and walnuts provide omega-3 in the form of ALA (alpha-linolenic acid). One tablespoon ground linseed or chia seeds or six walnut halves will meet your daily ALA needs.

The body can convert ALA to DHA (the active form). However, this conversion may be inefficient in some people therefore a DHA supplement (in addition to ALA-rich foods) is recommended for pregnant women. Vegan DHA supplements made from microalgae are available. Dose at least 200mg/day.

Fluids Ngā Momo Inu



Have regular inu/drinks throughout the day, mainly wai/water. Aim for 8+ cups or at least 2 litres a day. You may need more after exercise, if you've been vomiting or are constipated. Limit caffeine, fizzy inu and fruit juice.

Some herbal teas may not be safe during pregnancy – check with your midwife, doctor or dietitian. Avoid all alcoholic drinks during pregnancy.

Vitamin and Mineral Intake Kai Hauora me te Kohuke

Your kai should provide adequate amounts of most vitamins, minerals and trace elements during hapūtanga, however there are a few that need special mention.

Vitamin B12

It is important for people on a vegan diet to supplement with vitamin B12. Take at least 200 mcg of vitamin B12 (the cyanocobalamin form) every day prior to conception, throughout pregnancy and beyond. This is in addition to any B12 that might be in your prenatal multivitamin supplement.

Folic acid

Lack of folic acid in Mum's diet can lead to neural tube defects (birth defects in the brain or spine) hence you should be making sure your intake is adequate even before you become hapū. A folic acid supplement is recommended 4 weeks before becoming hapū through to week 12 of pregnancy. Prenatal multivitamin supplements provide the folic acid required.

Iodine

A lack of iodine affects pepi's growth and brain development. Even with a well-balanced vegan diet it is difficult to get enough iodine from food alone and a supplement is recommended. The safest way to ensure an adequate iodine intake is to take a daily prenatal supplement containing 150 mcg iodine. Iodised salt is also an important source of iodine. Avoid kelp and kelp tablets as these can provide an excess of iodine which is harmful.

Rather than taking lots of separate nutrient supplements it is recommended that you take a well-formulated vegan pre-natal supplement, in addition to separate Vitamin B12 and DHA supplements. Bear in mind that supplements do not substitute for a balanced diet. It is not recommended to take any other dietary supplements unless advised by your dietitian, midwife or doctor.

** Note, prescribed supplements may not be vegan but they are available if you prefer to buy your own.*

Iron

You need more iron during hapūtanga so it is important to include plenty of iron-rich foods such as legumes, tofu, tempeh, fortified cereals and dark green leafy vegetables. Include a food high in vitamin C with meals to increase absorption of iron (e.g. citrus fruit, kiwi fruit, raw tomato, capsicum and broccoli).

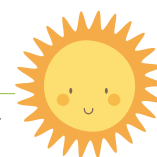
Avoid taking tea and coffee 30 minutes before or 2 hours after meals as they interfere with the absorption of iron. Your doctor, midwife or dietitian can recommend an iron supplement if blood tests show it is required.*

Zinc

While you're hapū you need more zinc so it is important to include zinc-rich foods such as wholegrains, legumes, soy, nuts and seeds. Soaking and germination of legumes and grains increases zinc bioavailability as does including a vitamin-C rich food with your meal.

Vitamin D

Essential for the bones, joints and muscles of your pēpi, vitamin D is formed in your skin when exposed to sunlight. If you are dark skinned or avoid sun exposure, as well as during winter and spring, your vitamin D levels may be low. Your midwife, GP or dietitian can prescribe a vitamin D supplement if needed.*



Other considerations

Healthy weight Taumaha Ora

Naturally you will need to eat more as the pregnancy progresses but don't feel you need to 'eat for two'. Likewise, dieting is not recommended while you're hapū as it can harm your health and the development of pēpi.

Weight gain varies between individuals but a gradual, steady increase from 3 months is normal. Your midwife, doctor or dietitian will offer to monitor your weight and will advise re: healthy weight gain / hauora.*

Keep active Kia Kori Tonu



Staying fit while you're hapū helps to manage weight gain and give you extra energy for the birth. Aim for 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days. It is best to avoid contact sports. Always follow the advice of your healthcare provider.

**If you have any medical conditions or special dietary needs (e.g. food allergies or weight concerns) it would be beneficial to see a dietitian with expertise in plant-based nutrition. Contact the Vegan Society or Dietitians New Zealand for recommendations (<https://dietitians.org.nz>).*

If that sounds like a lot of kai, let's look at how you could incorporate it into a healthy meal plan.
Remember to drink frequently throughout the day.

Breakfast Ō-Ata

Bowl oat porridge or fortified cereal with 1Tbsp flax meal, fortified soy miraka/milk and fresh ngā huarākau/fruit.

- or -

2 slices wholegrain toast with peanut butter.
Berry smoothie made with fortified soy milk.

Morning snack Paramana o te ata

Wholegrain crackers with avocado or nut butter.

- or -

Home-made bliss balls.

Lunch Ō-Rānui

Wrap with black beans, baby spinach, tomato etc.
Fresh fruit salad.

- or -

Bowl of home-made huawhenua/vegetable and bean/lentil soup with wholegrain bread.

Afternoon snack Paramanawa o te ahiahi

Handful mixed nuts.

- or -

Raw veggie sticks with fresh home-made bean dip

Dinner Ō-Ahiahi

Tofu stir-fry with Asian vegetables and brown rice.

- or -

Abundance/poke bowl with chickpeas, quinoa, roast veges and green salads.
Fortified soy yoghurt and berries.

Supper Hapa

Hot chocolate made with 1 cup fortified soy miraka.
Wholegrain crackers or toast if hungry.

VEGAN NUTRITION DURING PREGNANCY Written by Sandra van Lill (Accredited Practising Dietitian)

The Vegan Society of Aotearoa would like to thank the contributors and the many individuals and groups who gave feedback as part of the consultation process that helped shape this flyer; Dr Mark Craig, Dr Luke Wilson, Doctors For Nutrition, The Paediatric team at Dietitians NZ, The NZ College of Midwives, The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, The Paediatric Society of NZ. Translation by Ōkupu.

This resource follows The New Zealand Ministry of Health Healthy Eating Guidelines for New Zealand Babies and Toddlers 2021. Published 2024 Next review 2025

Disclaimer: The information in this brochure is for educational purposes only. While we have tried to make sure it is accurate and up to date, we cannot guarantee that it will always apply to your individual circumstances. If you have specific dietary concerns or medical conditions always seek medical advice from your doctor or health professional.

HE Code: HE2900