

How a Vegetarian Diet Could Affect a Pregnancy

[Analysis by Dr. Joseph Mercola](#) • Fact Checked • February 13, 2023

STORY at-a-GLANCE

- Heart & Soil, a company founded by Dr. Paul Saladino to help people return to the way our ancestors ate, produced a 20-minute video discussing the health benefits of eating an animal-based diet when women are pregnant or want to become pregnant
- Returning to the nutritional roots of eating fewer carbohydrates, no processed foods and an animal-based diet can help mitigate the effects of environmental toxins, such as ubiquitous plasticizers, are the core components of Heart & Soil
- Data show that infertility rates have been rising for decades in what Shanna Swan, Ph.D., calls "the 1% effect," describing declining sperm count, testosterone and fertility and rising testicular cancer and miscarriage — all at about 1% per year
- It is crucial to note that fake meat is not meat but ultraprocessed food with genetically engineered components; the industry claims it has a smaller carbon footprint than CAFO meat, but exchanging one broken system for another is not the answer
- Ultraprocessed foods are high in toxic chemicals, lack nutrition and are high in carbohydrates, all of which negatively impact pregnancy outcomes. They also contain linoleic acid that damages insulin sensitivity and produces heart disease, dementia and obesity



youtube.com/watch?v=0ZbmSh9wllM

In this 20-minute video, Dr. Paul Saladino, founder of Heart & Soil, a company that helps people return to the way our ancestors ate,¹ discusses the relationship between a decline in fertility and the food that most men and women are eating today. The diet is often referred to as the standard American diet (SAD), which is composed of highly processed, high-carbohydrate foods.

One of the biggest health struggles in the U.S. is weight. According to the CDC,² 73.6% of adults over 20 are overweight, including obesity, even though most people are seeking to be slim and within a healthy weight range.

I have long written about the benefits of eating a cyclical ketogenic diet that focuses on a minimal carbohydrate intake, which can help attain, and maintain, a healthy weight. In addition to lowering the risk of being overweight and obese, a ketogenic diet also reduces chronic inflammation and produces far fewer reactive oxygen species.

Eliminating sugar and carbohydrates also helps reduce your risk of chronic inflammation that is at the heart of many chronic diseases, which “collectively represent the leading causes of disability and mortality worldwide.”³

While I recommend that [diets] comprise no more than 5% carbohydrates, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,⁴ the average carbohydrate intake for men is 45.9% of their diet; the average carbohydrate intake for women is 47.4% of their diet.

In her book “The Obesity Epidemic: What Caused It? How Can We Stop It?” Zoe Harcombe notes the fundamental error made in diet plans is misunderstanding the law of thermodynamics. She believes there's an intricate biochemical dynamic that's unaccounted for when you only count calories in and calories out.

Thermodynamics refers to the movement of energy. For example, the energy used in making protein available to the body is from 25% to 30%. However, that same effect in carbohydrates is from 6% to 8%. While obesity is a significant health problem, it's not the only health challenge triggered by eating a diet high in carbohydrates.

Side-by-Side Comparison Is Impressive

In the video above, Saladino and midwife Lindsey Meehleis discuss the lack of nutrients in the SAD and how it affects fertility and pregnancy outcomes. Saladino and Meehleis propose, and have seen, that moving back to a nutrient-dense animal-based diet can help mitigate exposure to glyphosates and endocrine- and fertility-disrupting microplastics in the environment.

In the video, one mother of two, who was pregnant with her third child during filming, recounts her time as a vegetarian for seven years. She describes herself as “close-minded” after reading the headlines, but not really investigating the information herself.

It wasn't until she met her husband, and he began asking questions about her low energy and chronic napping, that she began to think maybe a vegetarian diet high in grains and meat alternatives was not providing her with the right nutrition. Another mother tells her story of being in her early 30s and learning that 40% of her eggs may not be viable because of her age.

Yet, after moving to an animal-based diet, she easily became pregnant and felt incredibly healthy throughout the pregnancy. Saladino, the midwife and the mothers who were interviewed all stressed the need to include organ meat in the diet, sharing that they are considered delicacies around the world because they are “some of the most nutrient-dense foods on the planet.”

Organ meats contain critical nutrients like choline, selenium, magnesium, vitamin A, zinc and iron. And, different from lab-produced nutritional supplements, they are more bioavailable. Meehleis recounts her interactions with a 30-week pregnant woman who she put on a supplement of heart and liver. Just one week later, the woman texted Meehleis that it was the best she felt through the whole pregnancy after only one week of adding “Nature's best multivitamin.”

Saladino's concern is that prenatal vitamins are not as bioavailable as organ meats and “cause more harm than good because they give people a false sense of security. They have this idea that I don't have to think about what I'm eating,” he says. “I can continue eating junk food or not eating enough animal foods.”

Meehleis explains the importance of the placenta as an organ that supplies the baby with nutrients throughout growth and development. “This is what nourishes the baby. This is the baby's home, and we have to look at what we're putting into our bodies today.” It is at this point in the video that she is viewing two placentas side by side.

One is that of a mother who ate a purely vegetarian diet throughout the pregnancy and the other ate a nutrient-dense animal-based diet. The placenta of the mother eating a vegetarian diet is noticeably lighter and more anemic in color and not as dense or healthy looking.

“I cannot believe the difference in the quality of the placenta and not just the quality of the placenta, but in turn the nutrition of what the baby was growing in and what the baby received throughout the whole pregnancy.” She goes on to explain the differences that she can feel in the different organs.

“It’s just obvious there is such a huge substantial difference in the quality and consistency of these placentas.” She pushes several areas of the placenta, saying, “This is called calcification. If you feel it, it’s hard and there’s a little bit of sand consistency. This is throughout the entire placenta and it’s not what we would want to see in pregnancy.”

Infertility Rates Are Rising

In the video, Saladino and Meehleis reference the impact that endocrine-disrupting microplastics and phthalates have on fertility. Researchers have noted the reduction in fertility in the last decades and understand the implications this has for the future of humanity. In 1992, Shanna Swan, Ph.D., from Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, first heard about the potential decline in fertility.

She is a reproductive epidemiologist and professor of environmental medicine and public health. She read a study⁵ showing evidence of declining quality in semen from the past 50 years and thought it sounded extreme. She spent six months evaluating the 61 studies that were included in the review and thus began her decades-long journey into unraveling this disturbing trend.

Through years of careful research, she found the smoking gun behind declining fertility is a class of chemicals called phthalates, which are so ubiquitous that the CDC has stated “phthalate exposure is widespread in the U.S. population.”⁶ An estimated 8.4 million metric tons of plasticizers, including phthalates, are used worldwide each year.⁷

Swan’s book “Count Down” is based on a 2017 study⁸ she co-wrote, which found sperm counts dropped by 59.3% from 1973 to 2011. The most significant declines were found in men from North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, where many had sperm concentrations below 40 million per milliliter, which is considered the cutoff point at which a man will have trouble fertilizing an egg.

Men in these countries had a 52.4% decline in sperm concentration and a 59.3% decline in total sperm count, which is the sperm concentration multiplied by the total volume of an ejaculate. Swan dubs the apparent synergy between fertility and reproductive health “the 1% effect” as data show sperm count, testosterone and fertility are dropping, while testicular cancer and miscarriage are rising — all at about 1% per year.⁹

Fake Meat Is Not Meat

In the video, Meehleis and Saladino talk about their patients whose struggle with fertility was reversed after moving away from processed foods and concentrating on an animal-based diet. However, it’s important to note that no matter how much the processed meat industry tries to make its products look and feel like real meat, fake meat is not meat. Far from it.

In fact, fake meat perfectly fits the definition of ultraprocessed foods, which typically have five or more ingredients, many of which are not commonly used in home kitchens.¹⁰ Fake meat products also include fake blood processed from genetically engineered yeast to mimic the taste and texture of real beef.¹¹

While the FDA has classified the Impossible Burger as generally recognized as safe (GRAS) using data provided by the University of Nebraska and the University of Wisconsin,¹² other experts are not convinced.

According to the Center for Food Safety,¹³ 94% of the soybean crops grown in the U.S. are genetically altered. There is not enough data¹⁴ to determine human safety when consuming chemical compounds, as these compounds are produced from genetically altered yeast harvested from genetically altered soybeans.

Ultraprocessed foods have contributed to obesity,¹⁵ rising rates of cardiovascular disease and an increased risk of all-cause mortality.¹⁶ The industry has used strategies to position this product as healthier and better for the environment, which has led many to believe the food they’re eating is protecting their local air and water supply. One of the claims is that the products are sustainable and leave a smaller carbon footprint than that of traditional beef production.

When this is compared to CAFO facilities, where animals are treated inhumanely, antibiotic use contributes to widespread antibiotic resistance and the waste products damage air and water supplies, they may rank a little better. However, as has been proven in the past, moving from one broken system to another is not the answer.

To assess and compare the environmental impact of typical beef production against fake meat, Impossible Burger commissioned a study from Quantis¹⁷ and Beyond Meat commissioned one from the University of Michigan.¹⁸ Both companies found similar results. The executive summary published on Impossible Foods¹⁹ showed their product reduced environmental impact between 87% and 96% in the categories studied.

White Oaks Pasture in Bluffton, Georgia, responded, and commissioned and published the same analysis by Quantis,²⁰ which showed the ranch had a net total emission in the negative numbers as compared to CAFO meat. Emissions at White Oaks were also much lower than the average production of soybeans, which is the base for plant-based burgers and fake blood.

Additionally, emissions by White Oaks Pastures included a large negative soil carbon sequestration, which I've explained in many articles is essential to protect against air pollution and climate change. In other words, regenerative farming techniques are healthier for the environment, produce healthy products for human consumption and feed the soil so the land continues to produce year after year.

In my 2021 interview [[Bitchute, March 10, 2021](#)] with Saladino, we discussed the nose-to-tail animal-based diet of the African Hadza tribe, who are among the best still-living representations of the way early humans lived. Their diet is primarily meat and includes organ meats and connective tissue, tubers, berries and fruit and honey from the baobab tree. Chronic disease is rare, and many remain vital well into old age.

How Linoleic Acid Damages Your Health

The problems with ultraprocessed foods during pregnancy don't end with toxic chemicals, lack of nutrition and high carbohydrates. Most processed foods are also high in omega-6 fatty acids, namely linoleic acid. Every man, woman, child and baby experiences the damaging effects of linoleic acid.

Processed seed oils, also referred to as vegetable oils, are damaging to your immune system, which in turn plays an important role in fetal and maternal protection during pregnancy. Researchers²¹ have discovered there is a unique three-way communication between the immune system, pregnancy hormones and the gut microbiota that play a role in adverse pregnancy outcomes.

In 2022, an immunologist with CNBC News named sugar “the worst food ingredient for your immune system,”²² in large part because it contributes to insulin resistance and obesity, which increases inflammation and causes damage to blood vessels. But what most health “experts” simply do not understand is that seed oils are even worse than sugar.

Not only are most of the omega-6s you eat, including seed oils, damaged and oxidized through processing, but even if they are unheated and pristine when consumed in any but small amounts, your body degrades them into free radicals that damage virtually every tissue in your body.

Saladino explained in a podcast that linoleic acid “breaks the sensitivity for insulin at the level of your fat cells,”²³ essentially making them more insulin sensitive — and, since your fat cells control the insulin sensitivity of the rest of your body by releasing free fatty acids, you end up with insulin resistance.

Insulin resistance and high blood glucose have a detrimental effect on a growing fetus.²⁴ It increases the risk the baby is born early, has breathing issues, weighs too much or has low blood glucose. High blood glucose levels during early pregnancy can affect the development of the child's heart, brain, lungs and kidneys.

In adults, seed oils are responsible for heart disease, age-related macular degeneration, diabetes, obesity and dementia.²⁵ During an interview with Tucker Goodrich,²⁶ who moved from IT risk management systems where he developed a program used by two of the largest hedge funds in the world to medical research, he explained that animals typically develop cancer when linoleic acid reaches 4% to 10% of their dietary intake.

Yet, most Americans consume approximately 8% of their calories from seed oils. This means we are well over the safety threshold developed in the lab. Data²⁷ also indicates that COVID-19 mortality rates are heavily influenced by the amount of unsaturated fats eaten. Unsaturated fat intake is associated with increased mortality from COVID-19, while saturated fat intake found in an animal-based diet lowers your risk of death.

The authors noted that unsaturated fats "cause injury [and] organ failure resembling COVID-19."²⁸ All told, the data indicate that women who are pregnant or want to become pregnant have a better health experience when they eat an animal-based diet and steer clear of ultraprocessed foods.



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