



Plant-Based YouTuber Brittany Jaroudi Shares the Biggest Lessons from Her Healthy Vegan Pregnancy

By Lisa Esile, MS
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Brittany Jaroudi was only 25 when high cholesterol, obesity, and high blood pressure motivated her to go plant-based. Her health **improved dramatically** after making the switch. “I can’t speak enough to what this lifestyle has given me,” says Jaroudi, who has since amassed more than 70,000 subscribers to her YouTube cooking channel, [@TheJaroudiFamily](#). When she and her husband, Mark, set out to start a family, there was no question in their minds that they would stay on a WFPB path. “It was nonnegotiable,” Jaroudi says.

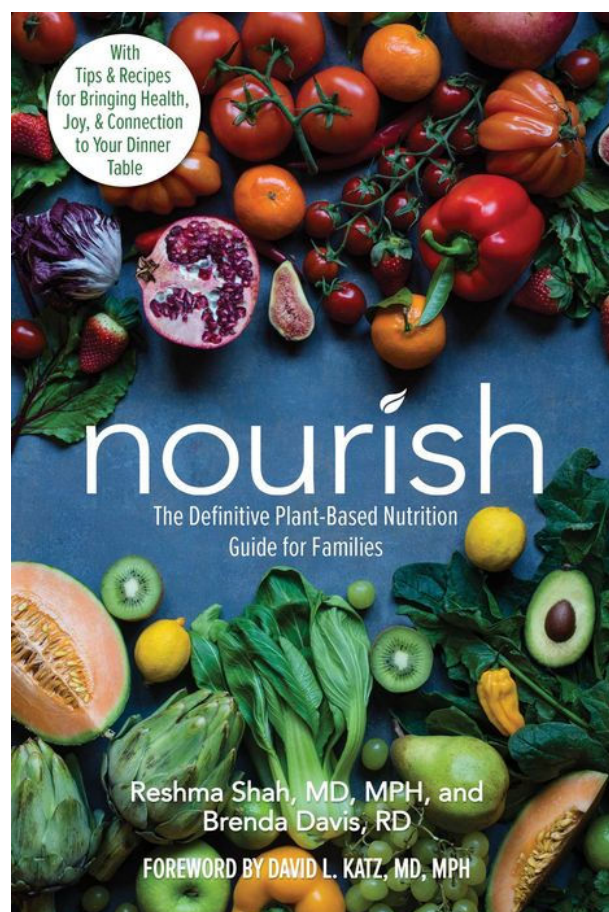
Given Jaroudi’s history of hypertension, health care workers pegged her as high-risk and initially expected to only let her pregnancy go to 37 weeks. But Jaroudi ended up having a smooth, full-term pregnancy—and taught WFPB cooking classes right up to the day before her water broke. “I felt like every time I showed up at the doctor, I was proving to them, ‘Look what this lifestyle can do,’” she says. We asked the new mom to reflect on her plant-based pregnancy and share her biggest takeaways. Read on for Jaroudi’s advice, along with expert insights from a plant-based nutritionist.

1. Pregnancy is a good time to be plant-based.

Jaroudi says it’s not unusual for people to abandon a vegan lifestyle when they get pregnant. “I think a lot of it is just the misinformation out there,” she says. “People are like, ‘Oh, my gosh, your iron’s low. You need meat.’”

But a plant-based diet is indeed safe during pregnancy; in fact, it’s advisable, even if you’ve never been plant-based before, says nutritionist Brenda Davis, RD, co-author of *Nourish: The Definitive Plant-Based Nutrition Guide for Families*. “There is evidence suggesting advantages such as a lower risk of excessive weight gain, gestational diabetes, and pre-eclampsia,” Davis says.

The key is to follow a well-balanced plant-based diet rich in **whole grains**, fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, and seeds, and to supplement with vitamins as needed.



2. Nutrition knowledge is power.

Doing research on plant-based pregnancies helped Jaroudi feel confident in her choices and better able to

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advocate for her health. Two books she recommends: *The Plant-Based Baby and Toddler*, by Alexandra Caspero, MA, RDN, and Whitney English, MS, RDN; and the aforementioned *Nourish*, which Davis co-authored with Reshma Shah, M.D., MPH.

3. Prenatals are a must.

Davis recommends looking for a prenatal supplement that includes iron, zinc, vitamin D, folate, and at least 150 mcg of iodine, 100 mg of choline, and 25 mcg of vitamin B12. Additionally, she suggests that plant-based eaters take a daily EPA/DHA supplement that includes 500 mg of EPA and at least 200 mg of DHA while pregnant. And bloodwork is a good idea: “Sometimes there are signs [of nutrient deficiency], such as fatigue with insufficient iron, but often symptoms are not overt,” Davis says. “It is best to have lab tests to ensure adequate intakes and absorption of key nutrients, such as vitamin B12 and iron.”

4. You need a supportive doctor.

Your docs don’t have to be plant-based, but they do have to be on board. If they’re not, you can find plant-based health care providers in a range of specialties, including obstetricians and pediatricians, through the [Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine database](#).

5. Meal prep makes life easier.

Having a store of meals frozen into individual portions makes it easy to grab what you need. “[Prepping meals] ahead of time can be a game-changer,” says Jaroudi, who went from occasionally meal-prepping to doing it regularly as a new mom. “It makes life really easy to have those ready-to-go meals.” Check out these [20 Meal-Prep Tips From People Who Have Been Doing It for Years](#).



How to Eat Whole-Food, Plant-Based at the Hospital

Staying nourished during labor and recovery is essential. Here’s how Jaroudi was able to eat plant-based while at the hospital.

B.Y.O.

While some hospitals offer healthy vegan food, it’s safest to assume you’ll need to supply your own. “I joke that my hospital bag was half baby stuff and half our cooler and all my other food,” Jaroudi says. Don’t be afraid to fill the gaps with WFPB convenience foods. Jaroudi recommends dehydrated meals from Leafside ([goleafside.com](#)) and Wellbean Bars ([wellbean.life](#)).

Leverage Cafeteria Options

Be sure to check out the cafeteria. “Sometimes it can surprise you,” says Jaroudi. She found fresh fruit and oatmeal there, which were good to have in a pinch.

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Communicate Your Needs

Hospital food culture is slowly changing. Don't be afraid to tell the kitchen staff (politely) what you eat; they may be able to accommodate. Jaroudi and her husband were pleasantly surprised when the hospital served them a delicious WFPB meal as part of a candlelit "Mommy and Daddy dinner." "I took pictures of it," Jaroudi says. "I was so shocked!"