

THE COMPLETE HANDBOOK TO VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN DIETS



Comprehensive Information For Eliminating Meat
Products From Your Diet For Health And Wellness

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Disclaimer: This publication is not intended as medical advice. It is for informational purposes only.



WHAT IS A VEGETARIAN DIET

A vegetarian diet is one that excludes meat, chicken, and pork and mainly includes plant foods. There are various levels of exclusion of meat and animal byproducts, depending on the type of diet pursued by the individual. The reasons for following a vegetarian lifestyle vary, and include, health, ethical and religious justifications. Since the consumption of saturated fats that come from animal products has been linked with high cholesterol, and heart disease, many choose to eliminate those foods for health reasons alone.



Foods Omitted From A Vegetarian Diet:

The type of food omitted from a vegetarian diet depends on the specific type of vegetarian diet the person follows. In various forms, the following foods may be excluded:

- All animal products, including fish
- Eggs, milk, cheese and dairy
- Any non-food products made from animal or animal by-products



VEGETARIANISM IN AMERICA

The use of plant diets are on the up rise. More and more people are choosing a meatless lifestyle or looking to get the bulk of their nutrition from plant foods.

- ✓ Almost 16 million Americans (5% of the population) are vegetarian and 50% of these people are vegan

(Harris Interactive study commissioned by the Vegetarian Resource Group). The number of vegetarians in the United States has doubled since 2009 when the count was only 2.5%.



- ✓ Data also shows that 33% of Americans are eating vegetarian meals more often, even though they are not fully committed to the lifestyle.
- ✓ A 2010 Vegetarian Resource Group Nationwide poll found that 1.4 million people between ages 8 and 18 (3% of American youth) are vegetarian; this number is up from 2% counted 10 years ago.

TYPES OF VEGETARIAN DIETS

There are seven different forms of vegetarianism and each one has its own set of parameters.

VEGAN DIET

The vegan diet is by far the strictest and excludes all animal products and their byproducts.

- Vegans do not consume any animal products, including, red meat, white meat (pork), fish, seafood, and poultry.
- They also exclude any foods derived from or made with animal products or byproducts, such as milk, yogurt, cheese, mayonnaise, butter, honey, gelatin, and eggs.
- Vegans also do not use any non-food products made from animals, such as beeswax, cosmetics, supplements, silk, leather, or wool.



Like any vegetarian diet, it is hoped that the convert will receive benefits such as weight loss, and the reduction of the risk of diabetes and heart disease, but for vegans it is more about following a philosophy rather than a diet.

According to the American Vegan Association, "veganism is compassion in action." It goes beyond a diet; it is a lifestyle and a philosophy. Veganism follows a "Reverence for Life" that recognizes the rights of all living creatures and nonviolence towards animals and the Earth. They eat solely from the plant world and follow a generally healthy lifestyle and harmonious living. Animal rights groups are strong advocates of this type of philosophy, and many follow a vegan diet.



The vegan diet includes all plant foods, such as grains, fruit, nuts, and legumes. Soy products such as tofu, soymilk, and veggie burgers are commonly eaten. Soy can be a staple of the diet because it is a complete protein unlike other vegetable protein foods.

Other substitutes for meat products include almond milk, coconut milk, oat milk, and rice milk. Cheese substitutes include nutritional yeast, as well as products made from soy and tapioca. There are even egg substitutes such as silken tofu.



LACTO VEGETARIAN DIET

The lacto vegetarian diet excludes meat of all kind, but does allow dairy, like milk and cheese. This type of diet is popular among religious groups such as Hindus and Buddhists, and many Westerners.

The lacto vegetarian does not consume eggs because it contains future life and meat is avoided since its consumption would involve the taking of a life.



The consumption of dairy products helps the lacto vegetarian to meet his/her calcium requirements, which can be more difficult in the vegan diet. Dairy products, such as milk, yogurt, and cheese, are common milk products included in the lacto-vegetarian diet.

OVO VEGETARIAN DIET

Ovo-vegetarians do not eat red or white meat, fish, poultry, seafood or dairy, but they do include eggs in their diet.



LACTO-OVO VEGETARIAN DIET

This form of vegetarianism excludes animal foods with the exception of eggs and milk. Like the lacto vegetarian, the lacto-ovo vegetarian has the advantage over more strict vegetarians of accessibility to calcium and zinc. This plan is popular among religious groups who eschew meat. Many seventh-day Adventists are followers of this diet.



PESCATARIAN VEGETARIAN

This form of "lax" vegetarianism excludes red meat, pork, and poultry, but does allow the consumption of fish and seafood. This diet is often referred to as "semi-vegetarian." Some pescatarians consume dairy and some do not.



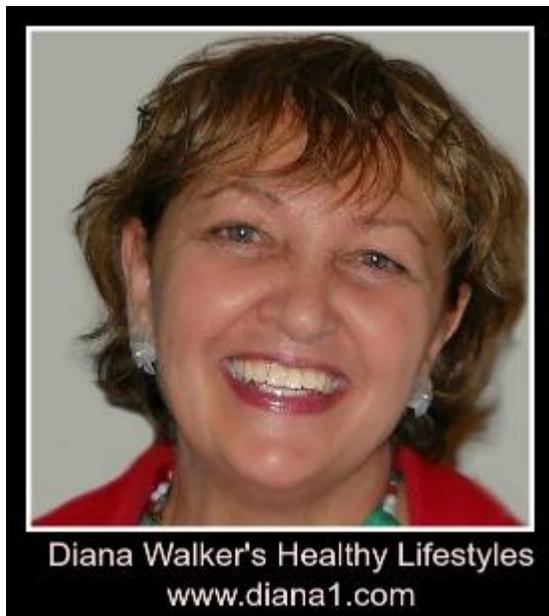
POLLOTARIAN VEGETARIAN

Another form of semi-vegetarianism, the Pollotarian diet excludes red meat, fish, and seafood but does allow the consumption of poultry and fowl.



FLEXITARIAN VEGETARIAN

Not truly, a vegetarian plan, the flexitarian for the most part follows a plant-based eating diet, with meat, fish, and/or chicken consumed only on occasion.



REASONS PEOPLE STOP EATING MEAT

There are many reasons that a person might stop eating meat and meat products. They range from environmental to ethical to health reasons.

HEALTH BENEFITS

People are increasingly conscious of the benefits of health and exercise, especially with the countless research data that shows lifestyle choices to be key in preventing serious diseases such as cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes. Studies show that vegetarian diets provide several important health benefits and can prevent chronic disease.

- **Prevent chronic disease** - People who eat a plant-based diet generally have lower cholesterol and blood pressure levels. They typically have lower risks for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, and cancers, while those who consume meat on a regular basis are at a higher risk.
- **Lower risk for heart disease** - One study (Tim Key, Director Of The Cancer Epidemiology Unit at the University Of Oxford, et al) looked at 45,000 volunteers (34% of whom were vegetarians) and showed “clear findings” that vegetarians have a 1/3 lower risk for heart disease than non-vegetarians.



- **Live longer** - The National Institutes Of Health funded a study that allowed Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California to continue ongoing research conducted into Seventh-day Adventists, named the Adventist Health Study 2. The study included 96,000 people from Canada and the United States and found that vegetarian men live an average of 9.5 years longer and vegetarian women an average of 6.1 years longer than meat eaters do. Pesco-vegetarians and semi-vegetarians who eat meat only once or twice a week or so were found to have intermediate protection against lifestyle diseases.

Dr. Michael F. Roizen who wrote the book “Real Age Diet: Make Yourself Younger With What You Eat” says that you can add about 13 healthy years to your life with a plant based diet because animal foods clog heart arteries, destroy energy levels, and impact the health of the immune system.

A 30-year study that looked at residents of Okinawa, Japan, who have the longest life expectancy of any Japanese and really anyone from anywhere else in the world revealed the mainstays of their diet to be comprised of

fruits, vegetables, complex carbohydrates, and soy.



- **Weight management** - The Adventist Health Study 2 also showed that people who eat meat have a higher body weight for their age while vegans typically have the lowest, and on average, they are 30 pounds lighter. Vegans are also five units lighter on the BMI scale than those who eat meat.



- **Less insulin resistance** – According to the findings of the Adventist Health Study 2, both vegetarians and vegans are less insulin resistant than meat-eaters, thereby having a much lower risk for developing type 2 diabetes.
- **Avoid allergies** - Vegetarians are less likely to develop food allergies.
- **Avoid ingesting growth hormones** – Vegetarians who never eat meat, fish or poultry and vegans, never consume the growth hormones and antibiotics that are administered to farm animals raised for food production and passed on in food products to humans. The jury is still out as to the definitive effects of ingesting hormones and antibiotics, but many believe that at the very best, they are unnecessary for humans, and at the worst they cause harm that is yet to be discovered.
- **Better mood and increased energy** - High intake of plant foods results in a better mood, huge boost in energy, and feelings of calm and happiness.

- **Prevent cancer-** Plant foods contain essential antioxidants that prevent cell damage that can destroy cells or lead to mutations that cause various cancers.
- **Ease menopausal symptoms** – Plant foods are rich in phytoestrogens, which are chemical compounds that mimic the behavior of estrogen. A healthy balance of estrogen and progesterone levels in the diet facilitates a more comfortable passage through menopause. Soy, a staple of the vegan diet is especially high in phytoestrogens, along with other plant foods like cherries, olives, berries, and apples. Additionally, vegetarian diets promote healthy weight management with a low fat, high fiber diet that can help prevent the typical weight gain seen in menopausal women.
- **Boost libido** - Plant foods contain libido-boosting properties, and vegetarian diets result in lower body weight that increases the release of sex hormones.
- **Vegetarian diets reduce the risk of contracting food-borne illnesses -** The Centers For Disease Control reports that there are 76 cases of food-borne illnesses each year in the United States that results in 325,000 hospitalizations and 5,000 deaths. The US Food and Drug Administration



(FDA) reports that the main sources of food-borne illness are meat, poultry, fish, and seafood.

- **Avoid toxic chemicals** - The EPA estimates that nearly 95% of the pesticide residue in a typical American diet stems from meat, dairy and fish. Fish, in particular, contain carcinogens and heavy metals that cannot be eliminated through cooking or even freezing. Sometimes meat and dairy foods may be laced with hormones and steroids, making it that much more important to read food labels.
- **Boost digestive health** – Eating a high fiber plant diet improves and supports digestive health, and helps to prevent hemorrhoids, constipation, and diverticulitis.

RELIGION

Some religions are known for their avoidance of meat, these include but are not limited to, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Seventh Day Adventists.

- Hindus believe that by avoiding meat, they are fulfilling their religious obligations. They also avoid meat for the reason of Karmic consequences.
- The central belief in Jainism is the avoidance of killing or harming any living creature.
- Some Buddhists don't eat meat, while others do, depending on their interpretation of Buddhist laws.
- Seventh-day Adventists are either lacto-ovo vegetarians, who avoid meat, but eat eggs and dairy or vegans. The philosophy behind this religion's recommendation to avoid meat is clearly stated, as “we believe God calls us to care for our bodies, treating them with the respect a divine creation deserves. Gluttony and excess, even of something good, can be detrimental to our health.”



ENVIRONMENTAL REASONS

The world is abuzz with environmental concerns and eco-friendly lifestyles; appropriately, there are environmental reasons why people stop eating meat.

- Large areas of land are needed to raise animals, particularly cattle. It is believed that this land could be better put to use with the production of crops for consumption. Crops, like other plants, also prevent erosion from taking place on the Earth's land.
- Commercial animal waste that is not properly handled tends to end up in our rivers, eventually contaminating ground water supplies.
- Overgrazing may negatively affect wildlife species. Areas that were inhabited by wildlife are sacrificed for the use of raising animals for food, particularly cattle. Natural predators who are all part of the animal kingdom and contribute to a healthy eco-system are eliminated to protect domestic cattle from predation.
- The emission of greenhouse gases by livestock is another reason that some choose a vegetarian diet. It has been estimated that livestock emit 14.5% of the world's greenhouse gases.



ETHICAL REASONS

Ethical reasons that drive people to stop eating meat and meat products have grown recently as farming has become more advanced in developed countries and some

of the horrors of farm animal slayings for human consumption have been highlighted in the media and by animal activist groups.

Many simply refuse to eat anything that had a mom.

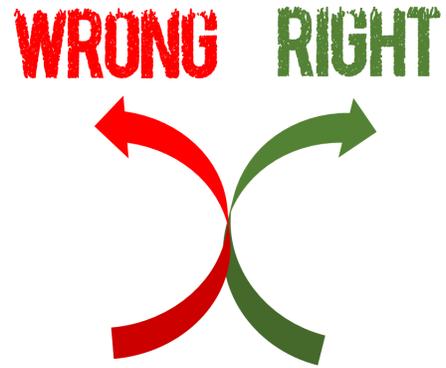
The ethical reasons include:

- The belief that killing an animal is like killing a human is one of the biggest ethical reasons
- The belief that animals feel the same emotions as humans and their non-humane slaughter for human food is not moral
- The belief that animals feel pain in the same way that humans do
- Some maintain that even the production of eggs and milk causes some suffering for young animals
- Premature death can and does occur, such as the case when calves are killed for the production of veal

The consumption of animals poses two moral problems that are endlessly debated in modern society:

- Is it morally wrong to raise animals with only the purpose of human consumption?
- Does it stop being wrong if the process is carried out in a human fashion?

For the vegan, the above answers are a firm yes and no respectively.



The Animal Rights Viewpoint

The basic premise to the humanitarian aspect of vegetarian living is that animals have rights, and so the raising and killing of animals for food is morally wrong.

The hallmark of the moral issue is that when an animal is raised solely for the purpose of feeding humans, even when it is done so in a humane fashion, that

animal is being treated as a means to human ends and not as an end in itself, which violates the animal's rights.

The rights of the animal refer to its interests, and the raising and slaughter of animals for food violates the animal's right to continue living.



This philosophy also maintains that modern farming and cattle raising methods violate key interests of all animals, including:

- Their rights to live in a natural and decent environment
- Their ability to make free choices
- To avoid pain and fear
- To graze in a natural environment and consume a natural diet
- To participate within the bounds of their natural habitat, which includes the social and community aspects of its species

The Hypocrisy Dilemma

In its simplest form, the ethical objection to eating animals stems from the viewpoint of a simple hypocrisy. We nurture, love and care for certain animals, like cats, dogs and even hamsters, while at the same time raise, and slaughter cows, pigs, calves and chickens for human consumption.

Those who challenge this hypocrisy raise a legitimate question: If we don't slaughter dogs and cats for food, then why is it okay to slaughter and eat other animals?

Food for thought.

AVOIDING GROWTH HORMONES FROM MEAT

Another reason people choose to eat a plant diet is to avoid eating growth hormones from meat. Commercially raised cattle are given antibiotics and growth hormones, which the consumer ingests by eating these products. This is just another motivation behind eating a plant diet that eliminates meat.



SAVE MONEY

Did you know that meat accounts for 10% of American's food budgets? Replacing the nearly 200 pounds of meat non-vegetarians consume yearly with vegetables, grains, and fruits can cut the average food bill by an about \$4,000 a year.



HUMANS ARE BY NATURE VEGETARIANS

It is argued and believed by some that humans are vegetarians by nature because of the anatomical differences between carnivorous animals and humans. The proponents of this argument say that we have more in common with herbivores in areas like facial muscles, jaw type, teeth, saliva, and how we eat.



HEALTH BENEFITS OF VEGAN AND VEGETARIAN DIETS

With all the advances in science and the loads of research that support lifestyle choice as the most successful method to prevent disease and possible premature death from such, many are taking heartfelt steps to make healthy choices in their diet, and exercise habits.

Vegetarianism is a healthy alternative for many people. Evidence exists that by eliminating meat, and following a plant based diet it is possible to prevent several chronic diseases and live a longer life.

The attributes of a plant-based diet cannot be overemphasized enough. Natural nutrients that come from earth foods help to nutrify the body, provide ample energy for even the busiest of lives and help to prevent disease in part

because they contain ample amounts of essential antioxidants that help protect the cells of the body from damage caused by free radicals.

Plant-based diets can play a significant role in preventing certain types of chronic illness, including cancer, heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Plant diets also help to



prevent obesity and its serious consequences and facilitate weight loss, along with improving digestive health.

PROTECTION AGAINST CANCER

Recent studies have shown that colorectal cancer is linked to the consumption of processed red meat. It has been reported that the risks of this type of cancer increased by 20% to 29% depending on the amount of red meat ingested.



The process of cooking red meat can also increase the risk of cancer. Cooking red meat over an open fire, or at a high temperature has been shown to produce powerful carcinogens. Grilling, frying, and smoking are methods commonly used to cook meats that fall into this category.

It has also been shown that a high protein intake associated with eating meat increased the risk of cancer compared to eating vegetable protein.



Both breast cancer and colon cancer are also linked to diets that include an excessive amount of saturated fats from meat sources. Statistics show that vegetarians have lower incidence rates of these cancers when compared to those who eat meat.

OBESITY AND CANCER

In general, those who follow a plant-based diet tend to weigh less than those who do not. Obesity has been linked to both colon and breast cancer, and so a vegetarian diet can be useful to that end. Experts also believe that people diagnosed with cancer can greatly benefit from plant foods and may increase their chance of survival.

PLANT FOODS AND ANTIOXIDANTS

Plant foods, especially fresh fruits and vegetables are high in antioxidants, which are molecules that neutralize oxygen free radicals in the body that can damage all parts of a human cell, including its DNA. When DNA is damaged, cells die or mutate and this process leads to cancer. Berries are especially high in antioxidants and should be consumed daily by anyone enjoying a therapeutic or preventative vegetarian diet.



Other Plant Sources Of

Antioxidants

- Cranberries
- Nuts and especially walnuts, pistachios, pecans, hazelnuts and almonds
- Sunflower, sesame and flaxseeds
- Beans: kidney beans, black beans, pinto beans and lentils

- Edamame
- Prunes
- Purple, red and blue grapes
- Dark Green Vegetables: kale, spinach, artichokes, broccoli, okra and others
- Red Delicious, Granny Smith and Gala apples
- Pears
- Pecans
- Sweet cherries
- Chocolate (at least 60% cacao)
- Russet potatoes and sweet potatoes with skin on
- Plums
- All orange and red vegetables
- Green tea
- Whole grains



Glucosinolates

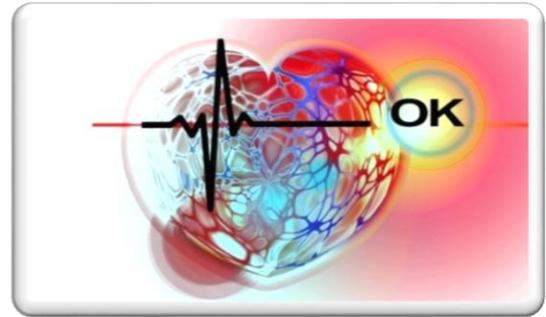
Cruciferous vegetables are part of a genus of plants that contain glucosinolates, which are known to have anti-cancer properties. Studies have shown that people who consume cruciferous vegetables regularly have lower risks of colorectal cancer, breast cancer and lung cancer.



Bok choy, Brussel sprouts, turnips, cabbage, kale, and cauliflower are just some of the plants that fall within this group.

HEART DISEASE

Eating red meat that is high in saturated fat is associated with an increased risk of heart disease. Processed meat, which has a high sodium content, is also known to increase the risk of heart disease. It is well known that too much sodium poses a risk for high blood pressure.



There have also been studies linking the substance L-carnitine in red meat to heart disease. These studies show that this substance rather than the saturated fat and cholesterol in red meats is the culprit in increasing the risks. Bacteria that live in the stomach consume this substance and break it down into trimethylamine-N-oxide or TMAO, which leads to clogged arteries.

Vegan and dairy free vegetarian diets are also naturally very low in cholesterol (unless the vegetarian over consumes baked goods, junk food or sweets), and this further supports heart health. The high fiber content helps to maintain low levels of the bad LDL cholesterol and increase the good HDL cholesterol.

OBESITY AND HEART DISEASE

Obesity is another culprit in heart disease and since plant diets are naturally lower in calories (when followed correctly), vegetarians are more likely to have a healthy weight.

PLANT FOODS FOR HEART HEALTH

- Oats contain high levels of fiber, which lowers bad LDL cholesterol. This prevents the clogging of heart arteries that can lead to heart attack, premature death and the need for bypass surgery. Oats also contain potassium, which lowers blood pressure. Steel cut oats are best and instant oats should be avoided because of their high sugar content.
- Blueberries contain fiber and antioxidants, which are also good for heart health.
- Soy, which is also rich in fiber, is known to prevent cardiovascular disease by lowering triglycerides. It has a high level of polyunsaturated fats, which is known to lower cholesterol levels. Soymilk, tofu, and edamame are popular forms of vegan soy protein.
- Dark chocolate contains polyphenols. This compound is known to lower blood pressure. It also lowers inflammation as well as clotting.



- Citrus fruits contain flavonoids, which are known to lower risks of cardiovascular problems.
- Nuts contain polyunsaturated fats, fiber and omega-3 fatty acids, all of which support heart health.
- Virgin olive oil is a heart healthy quality source of monounsaturated fats. A recent landmark study that analyzed people who follow the Mediterranean Diet, of which olive oil is a staple, showed a 30% reduction in deaths from heart disease for high risk patients. Healthy individuals enjoyed a 9% reduction rate for heart disease. It is also noteworthy to mention that the Mediterranean diet limits red meat to once weekly.
- The risk of heart attacks and strokes is further lessened by a diet rich in fruits and vegetables that contain phytosterols and other plant antioxidants. Experts strongly believe that the actual molecules and phytonutrients in a vegetarian diet play a key role in fighting heart disease in many different ways.



TYPE 2 DIABETES

In type 2 diabetes, the body becomes resistant to insulin, which is put out by the Pancreas in order to clear the blood of sugars (glucose) from foods consumed at meal times. Eventually the Pancreas becomes so overworked that it stops putting out insulin all together. In both cases, the result is elevated blood glucose levels that can lead to serious health problems, and premature death.

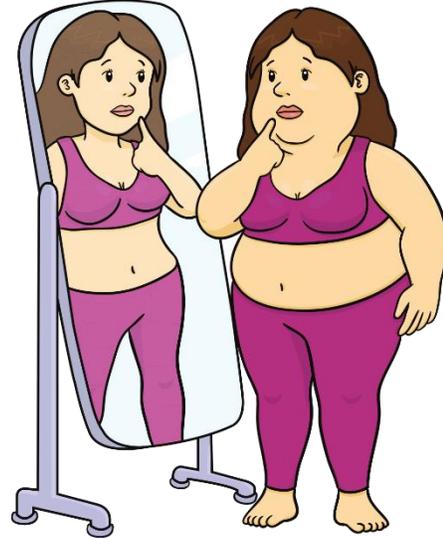
Studies have shown that the risk for developing type 2 diabetes and potential for insulin resistance is substantially lower in those who follow a vegetarian or vegan diet that those who do not.



The low glycemic load of the foods in a vegetarian or vegan diet greatly contributes to this lower risk as well as the fact that vegetarians tend to have a healthy weight. Those foods low on the glycemic index also contain a lot of fiber that keeps simple sugars from flooding the bloodstream.

OBESITY

Obesity is a worldwide problem, in the United States, alone the numbers have doubled since 2008 from 15% to 30% of the population. In the United States, obesity numbers are at an epidemic level. 68.5% of the US population is either overweight or obese with more than 2/3 of adults being overweight or obese in 2014. Of those, 6.4% are morbidly obese with a BMI of 40 or greater.



The number of overweight and obese individuals rose around the world by more than 145% from 857 million in 1980 to 2.1 billion in 2013 (Global Burden of Disease Study 2013, published in The Lancet).

Obesity and overweight are precursors to problems like high blood pressure, cardiovascular problems, type 2 diabetes, and even some types of cancers.

Eating foods high in saturated fat, such as red meat is one contributing factor, though most obesity occurs when more calories are consumed as opposed to those that are burned off during an average day.

Calorie control is the most effective way to manage weight, and typically vegetarians and vegans have a lower calorie diet than meat eaters because plant

foods naturally have less calories. Beef and full fat dairy is higher in calories because those calories come from fat.

Vegetarian diets are rich in nutrients from plant foods and they are low in saturated fats. Vegan and strict vegetarian diets include only fruits, seeds, nuts, grains, beans, and vegetables, and eliminate high fat and calorie foods, such as meat, poultry, and dairy. Beans and soy are the main sources of protein, which are naturally low in fat and calories.

Statistically vegetarians weigh less than their non-vegetarian counterparts do.

PLANT DIETS AND FIBER

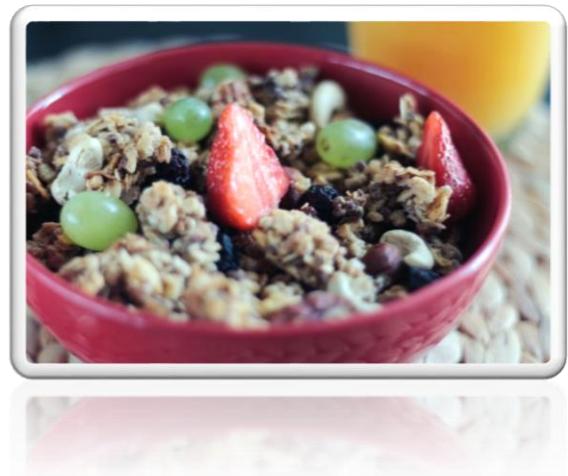
Fiber intake is one of the most important considerations in any type of eating plan, and vegetarian diets are naturally high in this important nutrient. Experts report that Americans typically do not ingest nearly enough fiber in their daily diet.

What Is Fiber?

Fiber is dietary material that contains cellulose, lignin, and pectin that resist the action of digestive enzymes.

Two Types Of Fiber

- **Soluble fiber** - Soluble fiber is a type that dissolves in water and then forms a gel-like material. Soluble fiber helps to lower blood cholesterol and glucose levels. Oats, beans, apples, carrots, barley, peas, and citrus fruits are good sources of soluble fiber.
- **Insoluble fiber** – Insoluble fiber promotes movement in the digestive track and increases stool bulk and therefore helps to prevent constipation or irregular stools. Good sources of insoluble fiber include wheat bran, nuts, whole-wheat flour, green beans, potatoes, and beans.



Many plant-based foods provide both soluble and insoluble fiber, though the amounts vary from food to food, therefore a highly varied diet that is filled with different plant foods is recommended.

Benefits Of High Fiber Diets

- Fiber fills you up, which results in lower caloric intake and less frequent snacking, supporting healthy weight management.
- Fiber lowers the risk of heart disease.
- Some evidence exists that it may prevent colorectal cancer.
- Fiber helps to lower bad LDL cholesterol, and increases the good HDL cholesterol.
- Fiber lowers the risk of diverticular disease.
- Fiber also lowers the risk of getting gallstones and kidney stones.
- Fiber greatly improves digestive health and maintains bowel health.
- Fiber helps to prevent type 2 diabetes and helps to regulate blood glucose levels in those already diagnosed. Since fiber supports a healthy weight in this way it also helps to manage, reverse and prevent type 2 diabetes.



How Much Fiber Do You Need?

Men age 50 or younger need 38 grams and men age 51 or older need 30 grams.

Women age 50 or younger need 25 grams and women age 51 or older need 21 grams

RISKS OF NUTRIENT DEFICIENCY

Vegetarian diets are a healthy alternative to the diets consumed by non-vegetarians with their high amounts of saturated fat and cholesterol. However, animal sources of food have certain nutrients that are either not found in a viable form in plants or are not present at all.

Meat has gotten, to some extent, an undeserved reputation over the years. It's true that the consumption of processed red meat has been linked to heart disease, but then the same could be argued for any processed food including that which is made from white flour and to which sugar is added.



A balanced diet normally includes some form of animal products as prescribed by the Food Pyramid created by the FDA. A balanced diet is one in which all the nutrients needed to keep the body functioning properly are met by a diverse and varied diet.

It is important to understand that a vegetarian diet in in of itself is not a problem. It is very easy for the vegetarian or vegan to eat a balanced diet if appropriate substitutes are used; this fact has been confirmed by the American Diabetes Association and other experts. The problem occurs when vegetarians do not take

the time to educate themselves as to the particular nutrients at risk for deficiency, namely those that come from meat and dairy, and how to include proper substitutions for such foods. Here are some of the nutrients at risk for deficiency in the vegetarian diet, and the best plant sources of them.

PROTEIN

Protein is considered the building block of life. Skin, hair, bones, and muscles all need this vital nutrient to do their jobs and to remain strong and healthy. When protein is broken down in the body, it turns into amino acids, which assist with cell growth and cell repair.

Some amino acids, known as essential amino acids, cannot be manufactured by the body they can only be obtained from food. Athletes and children are particularly at risk, since they need a higher level of protein than adults do.

Complete proteins are those that contain all essential amino acids, and are typically found in meat, eggs, and fish. There are several vegan choices. Combining certain foods in meals also creates complete proteins. One such combination is rice and beans.

While meat and eggs are considered some of the highest quality sources of protein, vegans, and vegetarian have available to them a wide variety of plant-based proteins.

Protein Sources

For vegetarians who eat dairy: milk, Greek yogurt, eggs, cheese.

Complete Vegan Proteins

- Chia: 4 grams per 2 tablespoon serving
- Soy: 10 grams per ½ cup serving (the firmer the tofu the higher the protein content), 15 grams per ½ cup serving (tempeh), 15 grams per ½ cup serving (natto)
- Soybeans: 68 grams per cup
- Mycoprotein (Quorn): 13 grams per ½ cup serving
- Ezekiel Bread (sprouted grain bread): 8 grams per 2 slice serving
- Seitan: 21 grams per 1/3 cup serving
- Quinoa: 8 grams per 1 cup serving, cooked
- Buckwheat: 6 grams per 1 cup serving, cooked
- Hempseed: 10 grams per 2 tablespoon serving

Combinations To Yield Complete Vegan Proteins

- Hummus and Pita: 7 grams per 1 whole-wheat pita with 2 tablespoons of hummus
- Spirulina with Grains or Nuts: 4 grams per 1 tablespoon
- Peanut Butter Sandwich: 15 grams per 2-slice sandwich with 2 tablespoons of peanut butter
- Rice and Beans: 7 grams per 1 cup serving

Other Protein Sources

- **Beans:** navy beans, pinto beans, winged beans, black beans, and others are great protein sources. Chickpeas, lentils, black-eyed peas, and garbanzo beans are too.
- **Nuts And Nut Butters**
- **Seeds:** chia seeds, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, poppy seeds, pumpkin/squash seeds, hemp, and flaxseeds.

- **Vegetables:** soybean sprouts, lentil sprouts, green peas, corn, sun-dried tomatoes, spinach, kale, bok choy, broccoli, cowpeas, lima beans, Brussel sprouts, mushrooms, artichokes and potatoes.
- **Fruits:** dried apricots, peaches, avocados, guava, prunes, dried Zante currants, dried figs, raisins, dates, and passion fruit.
- **Whole grains:** cereals, bread, whole grain pasta, quinoa, oat bran, wheat, buckwheat, couscous, brown rice, and many others.
- **Unsweetened cocoa powder**
- **Veggie burgers**
- **Soy protein prepared foods, such as veggie hot dogs**

Examples Of Vegan Protein Substitutes

- Swap bacon and sausage at breakfast for Tofurkey, and soy sausages.
- Swap burgers for veggie burgers, there are many to choose from including those made from soybeans, vegetables, and/or rice.
- Use tofu, tempeh, and seitan in soups, and stews to boost protein.
- Make burgers and meatballs for pasta out of beans, tempeh, lentils, and chickpeas.

OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

Omega-3s are a part of a group of polyunsaturated fats, which are vital for health. ALA (alpha-linolenic acid) is an omega-3 that the body cannot manufacture on its own, it is obtained from various foods, both animal and plant varieties.

Other omega-3s like DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) and EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) are the results of our bodies transforming ALA.

Omega-3s are beneficial to the body in several ways:

- They are good for the heart as they lower cholesterol levels, reduce abnormal heartbeats, and lower blood pressure.

- Studies have shown that they may be good for mental health, including memory, learning, and protection against depression and age related problems caused by dementia.
- They support arthritis relief by reducing inflammation in the body.
- They are also good for skin health.

The problem with the vegetarian diet and, particularly the vegan diet is that most plant foods only contain ALA. DHA isn't present in most land plants, except for fermented soy products. Even though DHA and EPA are converted from ALA in the body, there is doubt that humans can get sufficient amounts by this method and so therefore need to consume these nutrients directly from food. Flaxseed is a great source of ALAs but only animal sources, especially fish, contain EPA and DHA.

Our body's absorption of Omega-3s is affected by Omega-6s, which are found in higher quantities in plant foods. Too much Omega-3s can reduce the amount of EPAs and DHAs converted from ALAs.



Recommended Intake

Adults need between 1.1 and 1.6 grams of omega-3 fatty acids each day. The vegan diet is most at risk of not getting sufficient quantities of this nutrient, though supplements are available. It is best to get as much Omega-3s from food as possible.

Vegan Omega 3-Fatty Acids

- Flaxseeds
- Soy products like tofu
- Soybeans
- Navy beans, and kidney beans and mung beans
- Leafy greens: romaine, arugula, spinach and purslane (an edible weed)
- Walnuts and pecans
- Wild rice
- Edamame
- Vegetable oils: corn oil and sunflower oil
- Plant oils: flaxseed oil, linseed oil, canola oil, soybean oil, wheat germ oil and walnut oil
- All cabbages
- Cauliflower, broccoli, bok choy and Brussels sprouts
- Winter squash

VITAMIN B12

B12 is an important vitamin and while it does occur in plant foods, it is not useable by humans from these sources. Vitamin B12 does many things for the human body, for example the production of DNA and red blood cells, just to name two.

Typically, the only useable forms found naturally in food come from animal products, such as meat, milk, cheese, and eggs. This means that vegans and vegetarians who do not eat eggs or dairy will risk deficiency of this important nutrient.

B12 Deficiency Can Cause:

- Rapid heartbeat and breathing
- Pale skin
- Sore tongue
- Easy bruising or bleeding
- Stomach upset
- Weight loss
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Cognitive decline and dementia
- Megaloblastic anemia
- Nerve problems
- Fatigue and weakness

Some people absorb this vitamin better than others who may need to take additional amounts, and older people are particularly susceptible to this deficiency.

Vegan Sources Of B12

- Fortified non-dairy milks
- Fortified breakfast cereals
- Fortified nutritional yeast

Supplements are also available, consult with a physician before starting use.

CALCIUM AND VITAMIN D

Calcium is another nutrient that may be deficient in the vegetarian diet. Dairy foods are the most common sources of calcium. Calcium is contained in plant foods as well, but the presence of oxalic and phytic acids in many calcium rich plant foods, prevents the full absorption of calcium.

Calcium is vital for bone health, especially in growing children, athletes and the aged. Vegans and vegetarians who do not include dairy in their diets are most at risk for deficiency.

Symptoms Of Calcium Deficiency Include:

- Increased cramping during PMS
- Weaker bones which results in an increased risks for fractures
- Fingernails that easily break
- Dry skin
- Yellow teeth
- Muscle cramping at nights particularly in the legs

Prolonged deficiency can result in a condition known as Osteoporosis, a progressive bone disease characterized by decreasing bone mass and density that leads to an increased risk of fracture.

Vegan Calcium Sources

Milk, yogurt, and cheese are traditional sources of calcium; vegans and vegetarians who eliminate dairy can consume these calcium-rich foods to be sure and get enough of this vital mineral.

- Fortified orange juice
- Almonds
- Edamame
- Artichoke, kale, broccoli, bok choy, okra and collard greens
- Tofu
- Blackberries
- Soymilk
- Beans
- Soy beans

Plant foods containing oxalic acids or phytic acids also reduce calcium absorption. Supplementation and calcium-fortified foods will help.



Vitamin D

Vitamin D like calcium is necessary for good bone health and works in concert with calcium to help prevent Osteoporosis. It also helps in the absorption of calcium in the body and plays a role in cardiovascular health. Because it helps the absorption of calcium, it also helps prevent osteoporosis as well as other health problems.

Vitamin D Deficiency Can Cause:

Mild deficiency typically shows no symptoms, but severe deficiency can cause:

- Bones to become weak and brittle, resulting in an increased risk of fractures
- Balance problems due to muscle weakness

Vegan Vitamin D Sources

- Fortified orange juice
- Maitake mushrooms, chanterelle mushrooms (raw) and portabella mushrooms
- Soymilk fortified with vitamin D
- Almond milk fortified with vitamin D
- Fortified soy yogurt
- Fortified ready-to-eat cereals
- Supplements



Lacto-Vegetarian Dairy Vitamin D Sources:

- Milk
- Yogurt
- Eggs
- Swiss cheese

You can easily increase your level of vitamin D by simply spending 10 or 15 minutes a day out in the sunlight.

In regions where exposure to the sun is limited and especially during seasons of the year when the days are shorter, supplementation of vitamin D maybe necessary.



IRON

Iron is necessary for good health. Iron produces hemoglobin, which assists red blood cells with the delivery of oxygen to all parts of the body. A deficiency of this mineral can lead to anemia.

It comes in two forms:

- Heme iron in animal foods
- Nonheme iron in plant foods

Heme iron is much better absorbed by the body than non-heme iron. Because of this, vegetarians tend to store less iron than non-vegetarians do. Vitamin C increases the absorption of this mineral.



It also helps overcome the negative effects of the phytonutrients, including phytic acid, tannins, polyphenols, and oxalic acid that inhibit nonheme absorption.

Vegetarians can boost their iron intake by increasing their intake of vitamin C with citrus fruits, and colored vegetables, like red and yellow bell peppers and tomatoes. Broccoli, strawberries, and red cabbage are also excellent sources of vitamin C.

Symptoms Of Iron Deficiency

- Feelings of tiredness combined with irritability, weakness, and inability to focus due to loss of oxygen delivery to the tissues.
- Headaches that result from swelling of the arteries in the brain that is not receiving ample oxygen can also occur.
- Cravings for ice by women are sometimes experienced.

- Anxiety triggered by lack of oxygen to the nervous system.
- Hair loss occurs in cases of extreme anemia, since the body is now reserving oxygen for more important functions.
- Shortness of breath can occur due to low oxygen levels, so that normal exercise or slight exertion that was easily managed before now causes breathlessness.



Vegetarians and vegans are at a great risk for iron deficiency since much of the human diet derives this nutrient from red meat. Those who follow a plant based need to take care and include plant sources of iron or use a supplement as necessary.

Vegan Sources Of Iron

Dried fruit, broccoli, soybeans, and legumes are all great sources of iron. Supplements are available.

ZINC

Zinc is a mineral that contributes to immune system health. The typical diet obtains this mineral from shellfish, cheese, and red meat.

Zinc Deficiency Can Cause:

- A weak immune system
- Wounds that are slow to heal
- A loss of appetite
- Hair loss
- Dermatitis

Phytates found in some plant foods can impair the absorption of zinc increasing the need for the mineral in vegans. There are ways of maximizing the absorption of this mineral by the strict vegetarian or vegan, they include:

- Preparing grains by soaking before cooking
- Consuming sprouted legumes
- Eating fermented foods
- Consuming toasted nuts and seeds

Vegan Zinc Sources:

For those who include dairy, cheese is a good source of zinc.

- Whole grains
- Beans
- Mushrooms
- Nuts
- Soy products
- Wheat germ
- Supplements



BOTTOM LINE

A vegetarian diet can be very healthy when those nutrients at risk for deficiency are addressed and proper vegan sources are added.

The vegan needs to be even more watchful than other types of vegetarians, since they follow the most restrictive type of diet.

Consulting with a dietician can help with planning a well-balanced plant diet that will ensure the inclusion of all the vital nutrients the body needs and address any possible need for supplements.



WHAT YOU CAN EAT ON A VEGETARIAN DIET

There are plenty of food choices for vegetarians and vegans to enjoy. There are also hundreds of vegetarian recipe books and thousands of recipes online from a wide variety of cultures and countries so you need never get bored.



Vegetarians and Vegans Enjoy:

- Tofu, tempeh, and other soy proteins that mimic meat and poultry and can be used as substitutes for such in various recipes
- Beans and lentils
- Seeds and nuts
- All vegetables and fruits
- Whole grains, including bread, cereals, rice and pasta
- Oils from plant seeds, like olive, safflower, canola, soybean, corn and grapeseed
- Dairy for those who choose to include it, including eggs, milk, yogurt and cheese



- There are also many vegetarian soy products, like hot dogs, bacon, sausage, veggie burgers, and chicken nuggets. The many great choices of meat substitutes can still allow you to enjoy your favorite dishes
- Baked goods in moderation



RAISING VEGETARIAN/VEGAN CHILDREN

Nutritious vegan and vegetarian diets are typically high in fiber, full of antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals. They are also inherently low in saturated fat, rich in healthy plant protein and completely free of cholesterol.

Dr. Jatinder Bhatia, chairman of the American Academy of Pediatrics' committee on nutrition states that vegetarian diets for kids can be healthy as long as what is omitted is balanced with appropriate substitutes.



One of the more common concerns for vegetarian kids, as it is for adults is iron deficiency, because iron is more difficult to absorb from plant foods.

This is why it is important to notify the pediatrician that the child is not eating meat so they can test for iron deficiency. This is most important because such a deficiency may not become apparent until the child is older, and at that point, there may be irreversible cognitive defects.

Kids raised on a lacto-ovo vegetarian diet eat dairy and eggs are at the least risk for under nutrition. The vegan diet is most restrictive and poses risks for B12, vitamin D, calcium, zinc, protein and riboflavin deficiencies, and it is most important that those nutritional needs are addressed appropriately.

According to Reveca Roach, a registered dietitian and teaching associate at the University of Illinois' Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition comments while it is very difficult to raise a vegan child, it can be done as long as the parent completely understands their child's nutritional needs.

It is also important to note that unlike adults, a child's needs of particular nutrients will change through the developmental years, and those needs should be considered.

Parents who do not possess such understanding need to get the proper education. This can be obtained from books, authority sources online, or better yet a registered dietician and they need to communicate regularly with the pediatrician.

Two of the most common mistakes that parents make are to overcompensate for protein by feeding their kids an undue amount of foods high in saturated fat and calories, and the other is simply removing the meat without adding an appropriate replacement.

Exposing kids to a variety of different foods in various colors, textures and flavors develops a diverse palette as they age, provides optimal nutrition, and teaches them to be comfortable eating and trying a variety of different foods.

Modern Convenience

The good news is that it is much easier these days to raise vegetarian and vegan kids since meatless diets have become so widespread and therefore a variety of vegan and vegetarian foods are readily available at most any supermarket, including, soymilk, tofu, an array of fresh produce, and various vegan ready-made foods.

THE POWER OF THE LUNCH BOX

Do you remember when you were a kid how the idea of eating your vegetables made you desire a Big Mac sandwich even more? Well, that kind of reaction is fading fast as mothers promote the idea of eating vegan or vegetarian to their children and get creative while doing so. Today, you can refer to a number of meatless recipes online that are both vegan-and-kid-friendly at the same time.



It is important to notify your pediatrician that your child is vegetarian so they can monitor for nutrient deficiency. Replace meat protein with plant sources. Make sure to include plant foods rich in iron, B12, calcium, riboflavin, and zinc to meet their growing needs.

One way to incorporate the idea of vegetarian and vegan foods into your kid's life is by including a wide variety of types of foods into their lunch box.

Incorporate Variety

To incorporate variety, vary the kinds of breads that you use for your kid's sandwiches. Use such breads as whole grain rolls, pita pockets, bagels, tortillas, or raisin bread to keep your child's interest from waning with respect to healthy eating.

You also want to make your child's thermos fare a treat. How about vegan macaroni and cheese, soup or leftover casserole to please their taste buds? If your child can microwave the meal at school, he can repurpose the food into a lunch entree.

Fruit Selections

Needless to say, lunch box fruits can come in an array of colorful offerings. Try adding small bits of fruits on a skewer or long cocktail toothpicks. Fruits such as grapes, melons, strawberries, apples and orange sections are always well received. If you include apples or pear slices, add small container of peanut butter for dipping in your kid's lunch box as well.

Veggies That Go with Dips

What holds true with peanut butter and fruit also holds true with respect to raw veggies and dips. If you include carrots, for instance, in your child's lunchbox, you can also add wedges of pita bread and a hummus dip. Besides carrots, veggies that go well with dips include bell peppers, and celery.

Turn Your Kid's Lunch Into Brunch

Breakfast cereal can also be served in a lidded lunch bowl container and included with a non-dairy milk, such as vanilla almond milk, and a banana. Muffins are good substitutes for sandwiches. You can find recipes for such muffin specialties as zucchini and raisin muffins or blueberry muffins online. Include some soy cheese, fresh fruit, or soy yogurt with the muffin.

Salads With Kid Appeal

Salads that are included in wraps or pita bread will always appeal to the vegan kid who wants to experience a bit of adventure while eating. Add simple lettuce salads that feature veggie goodies like cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, chickpeas, baked tofu, and grated cheese. Tofu can be used as a chicken replacement in chicken salad. Add pasta salad for an appealing lunch entrée. Again, diversity is the key. Include such shapes as elbows, wagon wheels, and shells. Combine the pasta with such veggies as broccoli, peas, carrots, and corn. Round out the lunchtime fare with a favorite salad dressing or soy yogurt topping.

Faux Turkey and Burger Cuisine

While we know that kids typically like peanut butter, you may also try including nut butters that feature sunflower, almond or cashew spreads. A warmed veggie burger placed on an English muffin or whole grain roll is a good lunch “sandwich” to include for a teen or older child. Faux turkey or chicken meats are appreciated as well in lunchtime vegan meals.

Diversity is the Key that Unlocks the Door to Vegetarian or Vegan Meal Planning

For dessert, add such vegan goodies as rice cakes, applesauce, fruit cups, graham crackers, bag of raw unflavored nuts or granola bars.

Note: It is advisable to not add any unusual or “weird” vegan foods as ridicule from other kids can quickly sour the whole vegetarian idea for your kids.

24 TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED WITH A MEATLESS DIET

Diets that consist of very little red meat have been proven to help the heart. They yield better health benefits and can reduce your risks for various types of cancers.

Before you decide to eliminate meat from your diet, many experts advise you slow down and do it gradually. You want to make sure you are able to maintain a well-balanced diet in the process. For those who are open-minded, motivated and have a good imagination, going meatless can prove to be very exciting, so here are a few simple tips to help you go meatless without feeling like you are sacrificing a great deal. The good news is that it's not as difficult as you may think to eat a delicious and well-balanced vegetarian diet. Here are 24 tips to get started.



Tip #1 - Start Off With Meatless Mondays

Eliminating meat is not something you want to do cold turkey. You should slowly work your way into an all-meatless diet. You can do this by starting with Meatless Mondays. Eliminating meat from just one meal a week is a great way to test out and ease into this new lifestyle. Most dishes can easily be made vegetarian. For example, if pizza is one of your favorite foods you can remove the meat and pile on as many vegetables as you want or use tofu sausage. The key is to start small so

you won't overwhelm yourself. If you try to do too much too soon you will be less likely to stick with this new way of eating. Even if you decide going meatless is not ideal for you, incorporating even one or two meatless meals a week can go a long way to better health.

Tip #2 - Make Sure You Vary Your Diet

There are many different plant foods to choose from, and contrary to what some may believe vegetarians do not just eat lettuce all day long. There are hundreds of imaginative and tasty recipes for vegans, many of which simply replace meat in old time favorite dishes. The sky is the limit and that is a good thing because like any other healthy eating plan it is important to eat a wide variety of different foods each day to be sure to get all the nutrients the body needs.

Tip #3 – Stand Strong

Not everybody will embrace your new lifestyle, and some friends and even family members may even mock you or poke fun. This happens to many people. Change is scary, but you must stay strong! Connect with other vegans and vegetarians for support. There are many online forums and discussion boards dedicated to living a vegetarian lifestyle where you can find likeminded people.



Tip #4 – Make It Fun!

If you are newly starting this lifestyle and have older kids, make the transition fun and easy for them by creating games and excitement around vegetarian living. Plant a garden with the kids, where each child chooses something to plant. Have each child choose their own signature vegetable or fruit and create special events, like cookouts around it each weekend. Make fun smoothies and have kids help with chopping of the fruit and preparation.

Many fun vegetables recipes online will make this transition more exciting for the kids.



Tip #5 - Have A Family Recipe Challenge

Eating meatless is not easy, especially if you are used to eating meat with every meal so to make the process fun consider having a family recipe challenge. This can also be done with friends. The idea is for each person to come up with a meatless recipe for the others to try.

The person with the best recipe can win some sort of prize. Generally speaking, bragging rights may often be a reward in itself. Do this once a month or even once a week if time allows and by the end of the year, you will have many meatless dishes you can use regularly.

Tip #6 - Don't Be Afraid To Be Adventurous

To go meatless requires a certain level of adventure. You can't be afraid to try new things. There are so many recipes from different cultures that can be made without meat. You need to be willing to try as many as possible. Bring Turkey, Italy, Asia, and Greece into your kitchen. You will be surprised how much you enjoy trying meatless dishes from different cultures.



Tip #7 - Experiment! Experiment! Experiment!

To make your new lifestyle a success, it's important to experiment with different meatless dishes. If you aren't quite ready to make a meatless meal at home, consider trying one out at your favorite restaurant. This way you can get ideas of what you do and do not like.

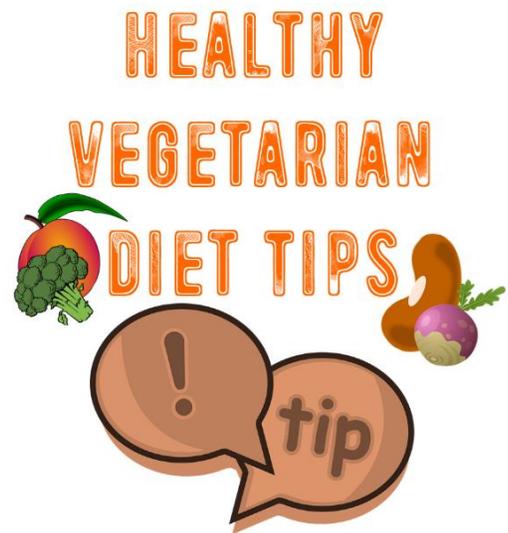
Tip #8 – Start A Recipe Collection

In order for anyone to stick with a certain way of eating, the menu must be well planned, diverse, and interesting. Starting a vegetarian or vegan recipe collection is a great way to ensure that you have access to tasty and diverse dishes that will prevent boredom and increase the chances of sticking with a meatless lifestyle.



Tip #9 - Don't Be Afraid To Have A Cookout

As a new vegetarian, you may think you can't enjoy a cookout with the family due to limited food options. This is completely false. You can get out there and barbecue with everyone else, the key is to plan. While you can't have a grilled chicken breast or a slab of ribs, you can enjoy soy burgers, soy hot dogs, fruit kabobs, all types of salads, grilled veggies, and potatoes.



Tip #10 - Make Sure You Get Plenty Of Protein

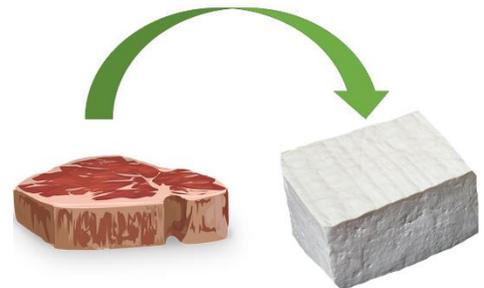
One of the issues people run into when changing over to a meatless diet is not getting enough protein. It is important to get into the practice of reaching for plant sources of protein. If you don't get enough protein in your diet you will not feel satisfied and your health may suffer as the amino acids provided by protein play a

crucial role in bodily functions. As a result you may abandon meatless meals altogether.

Plant based sources of protein are plentiful, and you should make the effort to try as many as possible to find those you love. Learn to make proper meat substitutions in your favorite recipes, such as replacing meat with black beans in chili and tacos or using chickpeas to make meatballs for pasta. Use tofu in stir-fry, stews, and soup. Snack on nuts and seeds and add half an avocado to your lunch plate.

Tip #11 – Learn To Substitute

As a vegetarian, you will eliminate meat from your diet. As a result, you will have to figure out new ways to get all the nutrients you need on a regular basis and to learn to make appropriate substitutions so you can still enjoy your favorite dishes. Many of your favorites that include meat can be made vegan. For breakfast, try soy sausage patties and make chickpea patties or vegetable lasagna for dinner.



In the beginning, this may seem like a difficult task, but with experience and learning you will soon know exactly what to reach for in preparing the dishes you love without meat and chicken.

Tip #12 - Keep Nuts Around

Nuts make the perfect vegetarian snack. Just make sure you choose the unsalted and unflavored varieties. They taste great and provide a ton of health benefits. Besides snacking on nuts, they can replace cheese and meat in salads and add a crunchy topping to steamed vegetables. Natural trail mix is also a great snack.



Tip #13 - Fill Up On Beans & Peas

Beans and peas are both high quality proteins that are very low in fat. Beans are also great sources of fiber. Because of this, it is recommended that vegetarians consume both foods on a regular basis.

You can have a three-bean salad, bean

tacos, chickpea burgers or falafel, pea soup, or vegetarian chili, just to name a few.



Tip #14 - Try New Fruits And Vegetables

You would be surprised how many fruits and vegetables are available and what you can do with them. Many vegetarian meals look and taste just as good, if not better, than the non-vegetarian option. The big difference however is they are a lot healthier for you.

Try new fruits and vegetables, you will likely find some that you have never tasted before. Make smoothies and homemade vegetable juices for refreshing and healthy meals and snacks. Try different cooking methods and recipes for vegetables and consume them in raw form on a regular basis.

Tip #15 - Learn How To Make Substitutions At Your Favorite Restaurant

Just because you are a vegetarian doesn't mean you can't go out to your favorite restaurant and enjoy a meal. The key is learning how to make the right substitutions. Most restaurants will gladly make vegetarian modifications for their guests. All you have to do is ask. Some restaurants offer soy options to substitute meat, soy cheese as a substitute for regular cheese, gourmet salads, and veggie burgers. If you live in a metropolitan area, there are usually plenty of vegan cafes where the entire menu is meatless. Before heading out to a restaurant go online and do a little research by looking at menus.

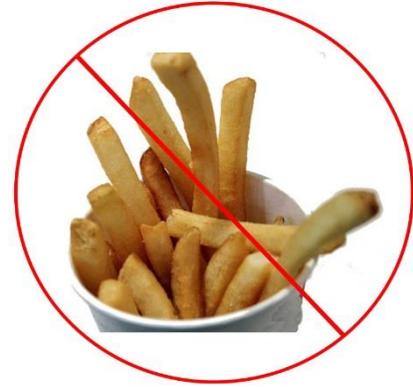


Tip #16 – Take A Vegetarian Cooking Class

How fun is that idea? Not only will you learn to cook vegetarian dishes you can meet and network with likeminded people.

Tip #17 – Limit Sweets And Junk Food

Please realize that just because you stop eating meat, it does not mean you are consuming a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol when it includes too many sweets, and junk food.



Becoming a vegetarian does not shield you entirely from unhealthy eating and the maze of junk foods available in our society. Meatless diets, like any others are about making healthy choices. French fries, donuts, candy, ice cream, white bread, pies, cakes, cookies and potato chips are all vegetarian, but not healthy and especially in large amounts.

Vegetarian snacks are also becoming easier to find as many people switch to this healthier lifestyle. However, not all of these are healthy options. Junk food is junk food and just because it is vegetarian doesn't mean that it's good for you. Moderation is key, be sure to treat yourself, but don't allow one of these delicious treats to become your regular go to snacks.

Keep in mind that to reap the health benefits, a vegetarian, and vegan diet should consist primarily of plant foods.

Some people go haywire on cookies and cake because they think that their vegetarian diet compensates for all other poor nutritional choices, but this is simply not true. Not only does junk food and sweets pack on the weight, they are typically loaded with heart health unfriendly saturated fats.

Tip #18 – Don't Compare Everything To Meat

Some get into the habit of comparing all the soy substitutes to meat, like veggie burgers or soy hot dogs or chicken nuggets. This is a typical pitfall. Learn to appreciate all the new and distinct flavors.

Tip #19 - Appreciate The Health Benefits

If you have a high A1C, (type 2 diabetes) or high cholesterol, check the numbers again after 6 months.

Tip #20 – Be Kind To Yourself

If you slip and have a steak, it's okay, forgive yourself and start again.

Tip #21 – Eat In-Season Produce

This way you save money and the produce tastes much better.

Tip #22 – Plant An Organic Garden

Fresh, no pesticides and within easy reach, enough said!



Tip #23 – Figure Out What You Will Do With All That Extra Energy

Plant foods provide so much energy that you will need to make a list of how you will use it!

Tip #24 - Find A Vegetarian Pattern That Works For You

No two vegetarians are alike. You have to find a plan that works best for you. Changing over to an all-vegetarian diet is not easy. That's why it is so important you take your time and find your own way. Follow the tips listed above and your transition will be a lot smoother.

SUBSTITUTIONS FOR MEAT IN YOUR FAVORITE DISHES

As previously mentioned, you can still enjoy your favorite dishes but without the meat. The good news is that human imagination knows no bounds in being able to duplicate recipes and eatery favorites without the meat, so you can enjoy your new meatless lifestyle without feeling deprived. Pretty much anything you used to eat can be duplicated with plant-based ingredients, including meatballs, and burgers.

Here are some great substitutions for meat in your favorite dishes:

Pizza - The sausage on pizza can be replaced with soy sausage or simply topped with vegetables.

Burgers - Hamburgers can be made with veggie burgers instead of beef, or even enjoyed with a pile of tomatoes, lettuce, onions, and pickles on a fresh baked bun. Eggplant makes a wonderful substitute for beef patties in burgers, as do potatoes, and Portobello mushrooms.



Tacos - Substitute beef in tacos with black beans.

Tofu - Tofu is a protein that is made from soybeans, virtually any recipe that calls for meat can be made with this plant-based protein. Tofu can be used to create tofu nuggets, or used in chunks in stir-fry to replace steak or chicken. Tofu is very good at absorbing flavors of any kind, such as sauces and marinades. Tofu can be cubed, just like chicken or steak for a weekend BBQ kabob. Tofu can also be scrambled to replace eggs. It works great in Thai, Italian, and curry dishes.



Tempeh - Tempeh is also made from soybeans but is much firmer than tofu and so it can be used to make vegan sandwiches like the Rubeen or pulled pork. Tempeh has a flaky texture so it's great for crab cakes or vegan fish sticks. You can also grind tempeh to make meatballs or filling for tacos. The possibilities and recipes available are limitless.



TVP - TVP (Textured Vegetable Protein) is a vegetable protein made from soy, can be obtained in all shapes and sizes, and makes a great replacement for any cut of meat, including ground beef. Look for specific recipes online to create tasty vegan dishes with this diverse plant-based protein.

Seitan - Seitan is another great meat substitute made from wheat gluten. Seitan takes on flavors really well and makes a great replacement for pork, chicken, and

beef. Recipes like Seitan steak with red wine sauce can quickly make you forget top sirloin. Seitan cacciatore turns an old Italian favorite vegan.

Mushrooms - Mushrooms are very meaty, rich and have an earthy flavor that makes them a perfect beef replacement. In

fact, you can build an entire main dish out of a large Portobello mushroom. They can be stuffed with any type of vegetables, such as peppers, spinach, onions, zucchini, and tomatoes and baked. If your eat dairy as part of your plan, melt mozzarella or cheddar cheese over them for added goodness. Stuff



them with nuts like pecans for a wonderful rich nutty flavor. They can be grilled with garlic and vegan butter and piled over a hot French or whole grain roll to make a filling and tasty sandwich.

Lentils - Lentils make great meat substitutes.

Lentils are healthy, loaded with nutrients, a quality protein, and are hardy enough to replace meat in many dishes. They are cheap and come in a wide variety and colors, including, red, yellow, brown, and green.



They can be used in chili, burgers, soups, stews, Shepherd's pie, and meatballs for pasta dishes.

Beans- Beans are fantastic sources of protein and make great meat replacements in vegan diets. Choose from the very inexpensive and filling varieties, such as kidney, black, pinto, or aduki beans along with black-eyed and chickpeas, just to name just a few. Mung beans provide the added benefit of Omega-3 fatty acids.



Beans make for hearty soups, stews, and chilies. Chickpeas make a great tuna salad, and black beans go great in tacos and chili instead of beef. Hummus, which is made from chickpeas, makes a great substitute for mayonnaise on burgers and sandwiches. There are endless varieties of bean salads that add color and flavor to a cool summer dish.

Vegetables - Roasted vegetables can serve as a main dish, and when they are flavored correctly can really wow your taste buds. Mushrooms, eggplant, beets, and potatoes both white and sweet can be made the stars of any meal, including breakfast, lunch, and dinner. With the use of herbs, spices, and sauces like Balsamic vinegar and soy sauce the possibilities become endless in using hearty vegetables to create vegan meals.

Imitation Crab - Thankfully, imitation crab is vegan and tastes yummy, use it for seafood salad, crab cakes, stir-fry, soups or simply to munch on for a midday snack.

Strong Flavors - Replacing strong flavored meats, such as bacon can be achieved in various ways. Tempeh bacon is available, but may not be easy to find in all areas of the country. Using hickory smoked salt or smoked paprika are good alternatives. Other spices, such as chipotle pepper adds a nice smoky flavor to vegan dishes. Liquid smoke can be found in the sauce aisle of your supermarket and a little goes a long way to adding a nice smoky flavor to any dish.

Pumpkin - This Halloween superstar makes for a great meat alternative, especially when it's pureed and added to marinara sauce for pasta dishes.

Okara - Okara is made from soy pulp and contains loads of protein and fiber. It makes a great meat replacement in stews, omelets, and soups. It also makes fantastic crab cakes.



Quinoa – Nature's super food, quinoa is a complete source of protein and also provides you with folic acid, and magnesium. Quinoa is oh so versatile that you will wonder how you ever ate without it. It makes for hearty salads, side dishes, and pilafs and can be baked in patty form for a truly gourmet vegan burger.

Sloppy Joes - How about sloppy Joes made with tofu? When made with a zesty and flavorful sauce, you will never miss the beef, promise!

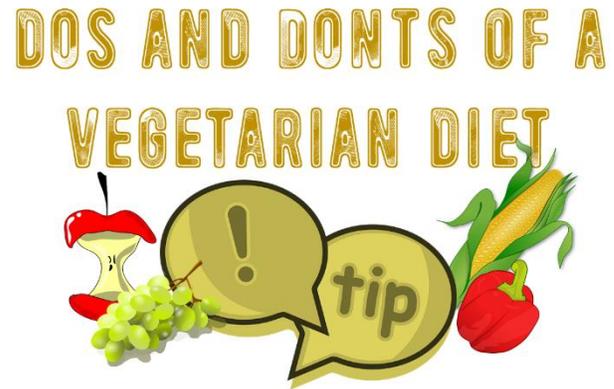
Buy It Premade - There are also packaged soy protein vegan copies of meat favorites, including tempeh bacon, breakfast sausages, burgers, hot dogs, chicken nuggets, chicken marsala, chicken picatta, pizza, corn dogs and many more. These foods offer nutrition, flavor, and convenience.

The above is really just a shortlist to get you started. Hundreds if not thousands of recipes exist online and in cookbooks for using all the above foods and others in vegan cooking to create tasty and healthy dishes that are loaded with flavor. With so many delicious options, memories of meat will quickly fade away.



DOS AND DONTS OF VEGETARIAN DIETS

Vegetarianism is a healthy and life prolonging diet choice. According to a study by the National Institutes of Health, vegetarians had lower rates of death from things like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and even kidney failure. These are great motivators to get started on a vegetarian diet, but before you do there are some do's and don'ts that you will want to follow to ensure that you have the best experience.



WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

Eat Whole Food And Avoid The Processed

Fast fix and instant foods are a very tempting option when you're cruising through the frozen section of your grocery store.

Unfortunately, the processes that these foods go through remove many of the natural nutrients and add things our bodies don't need. Avoiding processed foods will



help ensure you get the most out of your vegetarian diet. Instead, make sure you're eating a wide variety of whole foods that are unprocessed and one ingredient. This gives you a huge variety of options from things like beans and nuts, to whole grains to fruits and vegetables, like avocados, zucchini, berries, and coconut.

Do Make Your Favorite Foods Just Make Them Vegetarian

As previously mentioned, most any of your favorite foods can be made without meat. Beans are a great swap when it comes to replacing meat in a regular dish, milk can be replaced with almond or soymilk and cheese with soy cheeses. You don't have to avoid the things you love you just have to re-think them and do the research to find appropriate vegetarian recipes and substitutes.



Do Consult With A Nutritionist

A nutritionist or dietician can be a great asset when first starting the journey to a meat free lifestyle. They can help establish a sound nutritional plan that includes the foods you like to eat, makes the whole process hands free and most medical plans cover this service.

Do Remember Why You Started

Quitting meat can be difficult, there will be times when you will crave a cheeseburger or steak, and it's at these times when it is really important to remember why you started a plant diet. It is useful to make a list of the reasons before you start that you can refer to as needed.

Do Get Support

It's always a good idea to have people in your life who are also vegetarian or vegan.

Do Get Excited

Get excited about your new lifestyle choice and support your family in getting excited! You are doing something good for your health.

WHAT YOU SHOULD NOT DO

Don't Forget The Protein

Protein is an absolute necessity. Thankfully, you have lots of options and a good variety when it comes to choosing your protein. Many vegetarian and vegan friendly foods contain protein, and there are many great substitutions so you can enjoy burgers, tacos, and chili without the beef and stir fry and kabobs without the chicken.

Don't Be Afraid Of Tofu, Tempeh And Other Soy Proteins

It can be intimidating to look at a package that contains a white cube, and not have any clue as to what to do with it. Do not let fear keep you from using these great soy products to replace meat in your recipes. Go online or buy a book on how to use them and begin to experiment with recipes, before you know it you will be an expert.



Don't Forget The Supplements

One of the biggest mistakes vegans and vegetarians can make is not addressing their supplement needs. Supplements can be incredibly important for having a healthy well-rounded diet when you are a vegetarian. The first on this list is B12. B12 is the superhero of vitamins; it supports nerve and blood cell function, is key to oxygen moving through the body, and helps your body make DNA. Because this vitamin is such a superhero it's not one you will want to do without, however the primary source for this wonder vitamin happens to be found in beef and liver.



This doesn't mean you have to do without because many foods are fortified with B12 and you can get it as a supplement. When you are picking a food or drink that has been supplemented make sure that the label reads at least 25%.

Daily vitamins are also a good way to ensure that you are getting a balanced and healthy amount of the nutrients you need in addition to your regular diet. Ask your doctor or nutritionist about supplements you may need.

FINAL THOUGHTS

If you feel that a vegetarian diet is right for you, please take the time to speak with your primary health care provider and pediatrician before you get started.

A registered dietician is a great asset in developing a healthy and balanced vegetarian diet and you can benefit from their guidance and support through the transition. They will develop a well-balanced eating plan made just for you. Such a plan will ensure you don't deprive yourself of some of the most important nutrients your body needs to survive. As long as you are getting the nutrients you need, a vegetarian diet can prove to be a very smart health move.



It takes patience, and education to make a full transition to vegetarian or vegan living. However, the rewards are certainly worth your while. If you start out with a clear plan, you will greatly increase your chances of success and sticking with it for life.



Wishing you Vibrant Health! Diana