

## Eating Healthy as a Vegetarian

A vegetarian diet is a way of eating that does not include meat, fish, or poultry. Some vegetarians choose to only exclude these items and are known as lacto-ovo-vegetarians. Others choose to also exclude eggs and are known as lacto-vegetarians. Vegans choose to exclude meat, fish, poultry, eggs, milk, and all other animal products. Because each way of eating excludes some foods, there are some concerns that you will not get the nutrients that your body needs when following these types of eating plans. Each way of vegetarian eating can be done in a healthy manner with a little planning. Your Registered Dietitian (RD) can give you some tips on healthy eating and meal planning.

### What are the benefits and concerns of following a Vegetarian Diet?

Following a vegetarian diet can be a healthy choice for you. A vegetarian diet is typically higher in fiber and lower in saturated fat. People that follow a vegetarian diet are often at lower risk for obesity, heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and other chronic diseases.

There are also some concerns when following a vegetarian diet. This type of diet can lack important nutrients that your body needs and can be higher in calories, fat, and saturated fat if not followed correctly. If this is the case, you are missing out on the health benefits of following a vegetarian diet.

### What should I focus on eating each day?

**Here is a list of nutrients you need to include in your diet each day.** These nutrients are important for your health and are often lacking in a vegetarian or vegan diet. If these nutrients are lacking in your diet, it can cause problems with your health.

**Protein** is needed for the growth and repair of muscles, skin, and tissues. If you are not eating animal sources of protein such as meat, fish, poultry, milk, or eggs, you will need to choose plant sources of protein. Some plant sources of protein include dried beans and peas, nuts, nut butter, and soy products such as tofu, tempeh, and soy burgers.

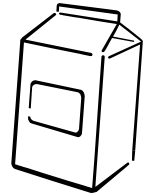


Plant protein can meet your nutrient needs just as well as animal protein. The only difference is that you will need to eat a variety of plant proteins each day. With animal proteins, variety is not as much of a concern as animal proteins are complete and offer everything your body needs. Most plant proteins are incomplete proteins (except soy and quinoa) and they do not offer all of

the nutrients your body needs. This makes choosing a variety of plant proteins each day important as each plant protein offers a different nutrient and a variety will provide the complete protein your body needs.

**Iron** carries oxygen in the blood. Without enough iron, you may be at risk for anemia. Some good iron sources include fortified breads and cereals, spinach, kidney beans, black-eyed peas, lentils, turnip greens, molasses, whole wheat breads, beans, and some dried fruits such as apricots, prunes, and raisins.

**Calcium** is a mineral that plays a major role in building strong bones and teeth and keeping your heart beating. Milk products are good calcium sources if you choose to include them in your diet. Other sources of calcium include fortified soy milk, rice milk, or nut milk, fortified breads and cereals, fortified juices, soy products, and some dark green leafy vegetables.

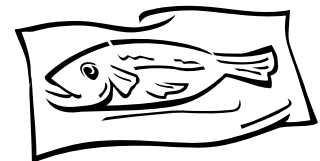


**Zinc** is needed to keep the immune system functioning well. Foods that will provide zinc are beans, fortified cereals, wheat germ, and pumpkin seeds. Milk products are also rich in zinc if you choose to include them in your diet.

**Vitamin B12** is helpful for building red blood cells and helping the body use nutrients for energy. It is found in animal products and some fortified foods. These fortified foods include breakfast cereals, soy-based beverages, and veggie burgers. Vegans will need to take a supplement to meet their needs.

**Vitamin D** is important for bone health. The main food sources of Vitamin D are milk products. Your body also makes Vitamin D when you spend some time in the sun. Vegans may not be able to get enough Vitamin D from their diet and would benefit from a supplement.

**Omega-3 Fatty Acids** Good sources of omega-3 fatty acids are fatty fish such as salmon, mackerel, lake trout, herring, and albacore tuna and nuts. Green leafy vegetables also contain small amounts of omega-3 fatty acids.



## Meal Planning Tips for Vegetarians:

### Breakfast:

- If you don't drink milk, try calcium-fortified soy beverages or calcium-fortified juices. These beverages will provide almost the same amount of calcium found in milk. Rice milk and almond milk can also be used as a good calcium source. Be sure to read the label as the amount of calcium found in these fortified products can vary.
- Try soy based sausages or bacon to boost protein intake.
- Use tofu to make a great scrambled "egg." Add veggies, cheese, soy cheese, or soy meat products or serve on whole wheat toast to make an "egg" sandwich.

- Make a fruit smoothie or fruit parfait with fresh fruit and soy yogurt that has been fortified with calcium.
- Cook oatmeal and add dried fruit, nuts, maple syrup and soymilk for a hearty breakfast.

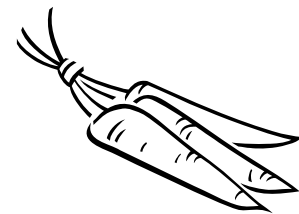
### **Lunch:**

- Try a soup made with lentils or beans and choose whole grain bread as a side.
- Choose a bean based wrap or burrito.
- Top a green salad with beans, nuts, seeds or soy cheese as a protein source.
- Check out soy based lunch meats.
- Top your baked potato with cooked vegetables, marinara sauce, and a little cheese or soy cheese.



### **Dinner:**

- For barbecues try veggie or garden burgers, soy hotdogs, marinated tofu, and veggie kabobs.
- Add vegetarian meat substitutes to soups and stews, such as soy crumbles, tempeh, or tofu.
- Remove edamamé (green soybeans in a pod) from the shell and toss with other fresh or frozen vegetables, then sauté with olive oil.
- When dining out, choose extra veggies in place of meat in stir-fries or pastas.
- Make a spicy soynut sauce to use with a vegetable stir fry.
- Broil vegetable burgers and serve with roasted vegetables and goat cheese.



### **Snacks:**

- Make a trail mix with whole grain cereal, chocolate covered soy nuts, and dried fruit.
- Enjoy hummus with fresh vegetables or whole wheat pita bread.

<b>Food group and daily suggested servings</b>	<b>Food Sources</b>	<b>Serving Sizes</b>
<b>Breads, cereals, pastas, and rice</b>  <b>(6- 8 ounces)</b>	Whole grain or whole wheat: bagels, breads, English muffins, pita bread, and tortillas Whole grain, high fiber cereal Oatmeal and oat products Muffins (less than 3g of fat) Brown rice Whole wheat pasta and couscous Quinoa, barley, and buckwheat	1 ounce = 1 slice bread 1 cup of ready to eat cereal ½ cup cooked rice, cooked pasta or cooked cereal
<b>Vegetables</b> <b>(2-3 cups)</b>	Fresh, frozen or canned vegetables	1 cup = 1 cup raw or cooked vegetables 2 cups raw leafy greens
<b>Fruit</b> <b>(1 ½ -2 cups)</b>	Fresh, frozen, canned or dried	1 cup = 1 cup fruit 1 cup fruit juice ½ cup dried fruit
<b>Calcium-rich foods</b> <b>(3 cups)</b>	Skim or 1% milk Almond milk, rice milk, and soy milk that is calcium-fortified Low fat buttermilk Low fat natural/processed cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese, cream cheese Soy yogurt, calcium-fortified	1 cup = 1 cup milk 1 cup calcium-fortified almond milk, rice milk, or soy milk 1 cup calcium-fortified juice 1 cup yogurt 1 ½ ounces natural cheese 2 ounces processed cheese
<b>Meat, fish, poultry, dried beans, eggs and nuts</b> <b>(5-6 ½ ounces)</b>	Beans Peas Nuts, nut butter, seeds Tempeh, tofu Soybeans, soy nuts Hummus Soy meat Eggs	1 ounce = ¼ cup of cooked dry beans (such as black, kidney, pinto, or white) ¼ cup of cooked dry peas (such as chickpeas, black-eyed peas, lentils, or split peas) ¼ cup baked beans, refried beans ½ ounce nuts or seeds 1 Tbsp. nut butter ¼ cup of tofu 1 oz. tempeh, cooked ¼ cup roasted soybeans 1 falafel patty 2 Tbsp. hummus
<b>Fats and oils</b> <b>(Use sparingly)</b>	Oils: canola, olive, peanut, flaxseed, soybean, and walnut Nuts and seeds Low fat margarine Cooking spray Butter-flavored sprinkles Fat-free or low fat mayonnaise, sour cream, salad dressing, and gravy	

## Sample Menu

<b>Breakfast</b>
2 slices of whole grain toast 1 Tbsp peanut butter 1 banana 1 cup of milk or calcium-fortified soy milk
<b>Lunch</b>
1 bowl black bean soup 1 whole grain roll or slice of bread 1 cup fresh veggies, sliced 1 apple 1 cup of yogurt or soy yogurt
<b>Snack</b>
1 handful of baked chips ½ cup salsa
<b>Dinner</b>
1 ½ cups Vegetable stir-fry with tofu and cashews 1 cup brown rice 1 cup fresh berries 1 cup of milk or calcium-fortified soy milk

## More Meal Planning Tips

- Stock your cupboards with canned beans to quickly and easily add protein to your favorite dishes.
- Keep frozen vegetables in the freezer and fresh cut in the refrigerator for quick meals and snacks.
- Have whole grains on hand that can easily be used for a meatless pasta dish, thrown into a soup, or used as a salad base.

## Where can I get more recipe and meal ideas?

- Mayo Clinic Website: Meatless Recipes: [www.mayoclinic.com/health/meatless-recipes/RE00104](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/meatless-recipes/RE00104)
- Allrecipes.com: Vegetarian: <http://allrecipes.com/Recipes/Everyday-Cooking/Vegetarian/Main.aspx>
- VegWeb.com: Vegan Recipes: [www.vegweb.com](http://www.vegweb.com)
- The Vegetarian Resource Group: Recipes: [www.vrg.org/recipes](http://www.vrg.org/recipes)
- American Dietetic Association Vegetarian Practice Group: Vegetarian and Vegan Cookbooks: [www.vegetariannutrition.net/resources/cookbooks.php](http://www.vegetariannutrition.net/resources/cookbooks.php)

## Do I need to take a multivitamin/mineral supplement?

- A daily multivitamin/mineral supplement that provides 100% of the RDA will help most people get the vitamins and minerals that their body needs. You do not need to choose a supplement that provides more than 100% of the RDA.
- If you follow a vegan diet, you will need to take a Vitamin B12 and a Vitamin D supplement. Ask your Registered Dietitian which supplements are right for you.
- When choosing a supplement, you do not need to buy a certain brand or the brand that costs the most money. Many store brand supplements are of high quality. Look for supplements that have USP (United States Pharmacopeia) on the label. This lets you know that the supplements are of high quality.
- Take your supplement with a meal, as they are normally better absorbed when taken with food.



### References:

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4. USDA MyPyramid.gov. [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov). Accessed 7/08.
5. RD411.com. Going Veggie-Adopting a More Meatless Lifestyle. [www.rd411.com](http://www.rd411.com). Accessed 7/08.

**For more information or to speak with a Registered Dietitian, call OSF Saint Francis Nutrition Access Line (309) 655-3705.**