

The Vegetarian Way for Adults

For some people being a vegetarian is a way of eating all of the time. For others, an occasional vegetarian meal adds variety to their current menu. Whatever your reasons are, here is some nutrition information to get you started in making sensible vegetarian choices.

What's In A Name?

The term vegetarian means different things to different people. Vegetarian styles usually vary in the extent to which they exclude animal products. The *types* of vegetarians and their eating styles are often classified into the following:

Lacto-ovo vegetarians avoid meat, fish, and poultry. They include milk products and eggs in their diet.

Lacto vegetarians include milk products in their diet, but they avoid meat, fish, poultry, and eggs.

Vegans (pronounced VEEgun) are strict vegetarians who avoid all animal products. Vegans never eat meat, fish, poultry, milk products, or eggs.

Even within these classifications, people may follow an eating style that differs widely from the definitions above. Depending on the type of vegetarian you are, there are nutrition issues to consider to ensure that you enjoy a balanced and healthy eating style. The main point is that when you eliminate certain foods, or entire food groups, you need to replace them with foods that supply similar nutrients.

Potential Pitfalls of a Vegetarian Diet

Replacing meat with cheese.

While cheese is a source of protein, it doesn't supply iron or a significant amount of zinc, nutrients found in meat. Also, consuming a lot of higher fat milk products may result in a high fat diet. Replace the nutrients usually supplied by meat by including at least two servings per day of the Meat Alternatives from the Vegetarian Food Guide included with this fact sheet.

Replacing meat with more vegetables, rice or pasta.

Vegetables and grains alone will not supply all of the nutrients your body needs. Go for a wider variety of foods to cover all of your nutrient needs. Be sure to choose Meat Alternatives daily.

Replacing cow's milk with unfortified soy or rice beverages.

Unfortified soy or rice beverages can't compare to milk when it comes to calcium, riboflavin, or vitamins D, A and B₁₂. However, you can get fortified soy beverages in Canada. Be sure to check the label carefully to see if it has added nutrients such as calcium, zinc, and vitamins D, A and B₁₂.

Vegetarian Nutrition Savvy

Protein

Some people worry about the protein in a vegetarian diet. But, protein is not the main nutrition concern when it comes to vegetarian diets. Protein is found in many foods. Eat a variety of vegetables, grains, and legumes and enough calories to maintain a healthy weight to meet your protein needs. You may have heard about combining proteins, however, this is only an issue for infants and children.

Protein Powerhouses

- ◆ Legumes (dried beans, peas, lentils)
- ◆ Soybeans and soy products (tofu, tempeh, soy beverages, roasted soybeans)
- ◆ Grain products (rice, barley, quinoa, kasha, amaranth, breads, cereals)
- ◆ Milk Products
- ◆ Eggs
- ◆ Nuts and nut butters
- ◆ Seeds
- ◆ Vegetables

Calcium

Vegetarians who include two to four servings of milk, cheese, or yogurt in their daily diet get plenty of calcium. If you don't eat milk products you can get calcium from other plant-based foods.

Vegetarian Sources of Calcium

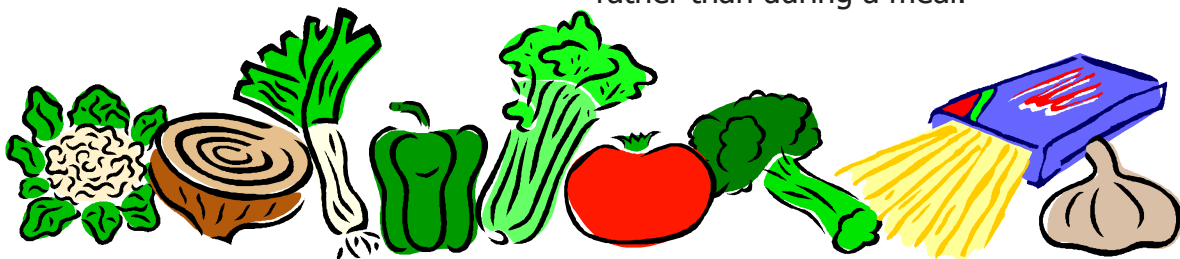
- ◆ Calcium fortified soy beverages
- ◆ Tofu processed with calcium (check the label)
- ◆ Kale
- ◆ Collards
- ◆ Mustard and turnip greens
- ◆ Broccoli
- ◆ Bok choy
- ◆ Okra
- ◆ Kidney beans
- ◆ Navy beans
- ◆ Chickpeas
- ◆ Sunflower and sesame seeds
- ◆ Tahini
- ◆ Blackstrap molasses
- ◆ Dried figs
- ◆ Almonds

Vitamin D

Vitamin D, often called the sunshine vitamin, is produced when your skin is exposed to sunlight. Ten to 30 minutes of sun exposure a day may help you meet your vitamin D requirements. Few foods are naturally good sources of vitamin D. Foods that are fortified with vitamin D include milk, margarine, and some soy beverages.

Iron

Like all diets, vegetarian diets need to include iron-rich foods. The iron in plant foods, called "non heme" iron, is absorbed differently than the "heme" iron in meat. To enhance iron absorption, eat iron-rich vegetarian fare with food sources of vitamin C such as citrus fruit or juices, broccoli, tomatoes, and green and red peppers. Use cast iron cookware to increase the iron of the food cooked in it. Tannins in tea and coffee reduce the absorption of non heme iron from plant foods by as much as half. If you drink these beverages enjoy them between meals rather than during a meal.



Iron-Rich Vegetarian Foods

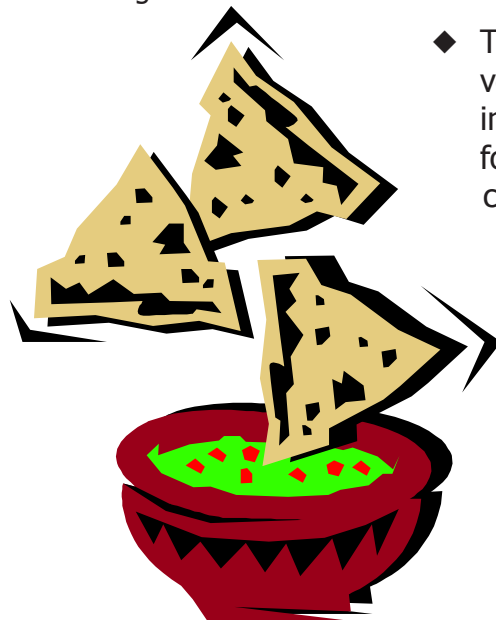
- ◆ Roasted soybeans
- ◆ Pinto beans
- ◆ Chickpeas
- ◆ Lentils
- ◆ Tofu
- ◆ Whole and enriched grain products
- ◆ Wheat germ
- ◆ Prune juice
- ◆ Raisins
- ◆ Figs
- ◆ Apricots
- ◆ Blackstrap molasses
- ◆ Pumpkin, sunflower and sesame seeds
- ◆ Eggs
- ◆ Broccoli
- ◆ Swiss chard
- ◆ Bok choy
- ◆ Kale
- ◆ Green peas
- ◆ Millet
- ◆ Sea vegetables such as kelp, nori and dulse
- ◆ Cashews

Zinc

Meeting the recommended intake of zinc can be a challenge for vegetarians, as well as nonvegetarians. This is especially true if you have limited food choices.

Vegetarian Zinc Boosters

- ◆ Tofu
- ◆ Tempeh
- ◆ Textured vegetable protein
- ◆ Pumpkin and sunflower seeds
- ◆ Pinto beans
- ◆ Black beans
- ◆ Lima beans
- ◆ Kidney beans
- ◆ Chickpeas
- ◆ Split peas
- ◆ Lentils
- ◆ Wheat germ
- ◆ Millet
- ◆ Oatmeal
- ◆ Fortified cereals
- ◆ Tahini
- ◆ Cashews
- ◆ Pecans
- ◆ Peanut butter
- ◆ Avocados
- ◆ Green peas
- ◆ Okra
- ◆ Mushrooms
- ◆ Sea vegetables
- ◆ Nutritional yeast
- ◆ Eggs
- ◆ Milk
- ◆ Cheese
- ◆ Yogurt



Vitamin B₁₂

This nutrient can be a challenge, especially for vegans. Vitamin B₁₂ is only found naturally in animal products, so if you eat eggs or milk products you get plenty of this vitamin. If you don't eat these foods, you need to eat vitamin B₁₂ fortified foods such as soy beverages, nutritional yeast, and veggie burgers or wieners. Red Star Vegetarian Support (T6635) Nutritional Yeast is a source of vitamin B₁₂. Some foods such as algae or spirulina should not be considered a reliable source of vitamin B₁₂. Look for the word "cyanocobalamin" on food labels or ingredient lists to be sure that you are buying a reliable source of vitamin B₁₂.

Vegans should talk to their doctor about having their blood levels checked for this vitamin. Discuss the need for a vitamin supplement with your doctor or a Registered Dietitian.

Planning a Vegetarian Eating Style

With any type of diet, healthy eating is easier with some planning. The foundation of a vegetarian diet comes from the earth - grains, vegetables, fruit, legumes, nuts, and seeds. Plan a healthful vegetarian diet with the following points in mind:

- ◆ Think variety. Include a wide range of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and legumes in your diet. Build your meals around these foods. Try pasta tossed with fresh tomatoes, chickpeas and basil, 3-bean chili with tortillas, or vegetable stir-fry with tofu.
- ◆ Eat enough calories to meet your energy needs and to maintain a healthy weight. This is your best bet for meeting your nutritional needs.

- ◆ Plan to make leftovers. Next time you make chili, soup, or a casserole, make extra to have in the next couple of days, or freeze for later use. This strategy can be a life saver when time is short!

Expand Your Food Horizons

Be adventurous and explore some of these foods:

Soy Products

Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP) granules can be used in place of ground meat in recipes such as chili, tacos, sloppy Joes, casseroles, or spaghetti sauce. TVP absorbs the fluid in recipes and has a chewy consistency like meat. It's available at most bulk or natural food stores.

Tofu or tempeh can be used in place of meat in many recipes. They can be crumbled, cubed, grilled, stir-fried, or baked. Try marinating tofu or tempeh before cooking as they absorb flavours well.

Veggie burgers or wieners can be used as you would meat-based ones. Look for those that are fortified with extra vitamins and minerals such as vitamin B₁₂.

Fortified soy beverages can be used measure for measure in place of cow's milk in most recipes.

Legumes

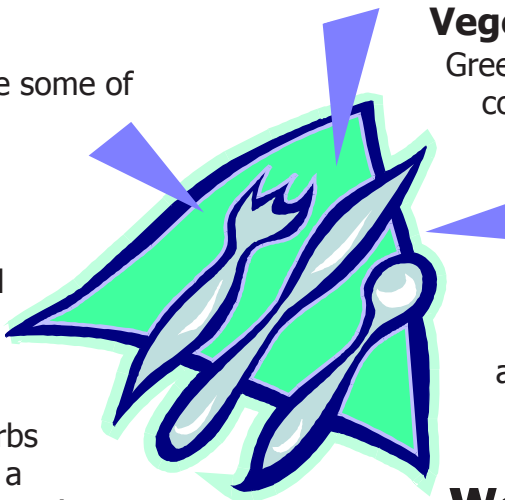
Most of us have had kidney beans or baked beans, but there are more legumes to explore. Try black beans in burritos, lentils in soup or stew, and mashed chickpeas for a tasty sandwich spread. Often you can substitute legumes for the meat in recipes.

Great Grains

With vegetarian meals, grains play a key role. Be willing to explore the different grains available. Many ethnic cuisines include grains such as polenta (made from cornmeal), rice (brown, basmati, jasmine), couscous, barley, kasha, millet, bulgar, wheat berries, oats, or the "ancient" grains, spelt, quinoa, and amaranth.

Vegetables

Green leafy vegetables such as kale, collards, mustard, turnip and dandelion greens are especially valuable for providing a wide variety of nutrients (particularly calcium). While they may not be common in most households, these greens add colour, texture, and a burst of flavour to your meals.



Want to know more?

Visit the public library or bookstores for vegetarian cookbooks. Some recommended reading includes:

Becoming Vegetarian by V. Melina, B. Davis and V. Harrison. MacMillan Canada, 1996.

Lean Bean Cuisine by Jay Solomon. Prima Publishing USA, 1995.

Moosewood Restaurant Low Fat Favorites by The Moosewood Collective. Clarkson N. Potter Inc. USA, 1996.

Vegetarian Times Complete Cookbook by the Editors of Vegetarian Times and L. Moll. Macmillan USA, 1995.

Vegetarian Times Low-fat & Fast by the Editors of Vegetarian Times. Macmillan USA, 1996.

Questions?

Call the Nutrition and Physical Activity Advice Line at 905-546-3630. A Registered Dietitian will be able to answer your nutrition questions.

Vegetarian Food Guide

Grain Products

5 to 12 Servings Per Day

Choose whole grain and enriched products.



1 Serving

1 slice bread
175-mL/ 3/4 cup cooked cereal
30 g dry cereal

2 Servings

1 bagel, pita, bun or roll
250 mL/1 cup pasta, rice or other grains

Vegetables & Fruit

5 to 10 Servings Per Day

Choose dark green and orange vegetables and orange fruit more often.



1 Serving

1 medium size vegetable or fruit
125 mL/1/2 cup fresh, frozen or canned vegetables or fruit

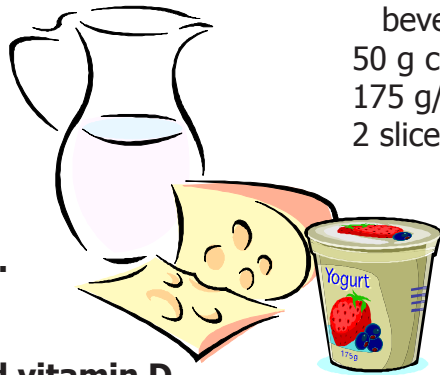
250 mL/1 cup salad

125 mL/1/2 cup 100% vegetable or fruit juice

Milk Products & Milk Alternatives

2 to 4 Servings Per Day

Choose lower fat milk products and milk alternatives more often. Choose soy beverages that are fortified with calcium, vitamin B₁₂ and vitamin D.



1 Serving

250 mL/1 cup cow's milk or fortified soy beverage

50 g cheese or soy cheese

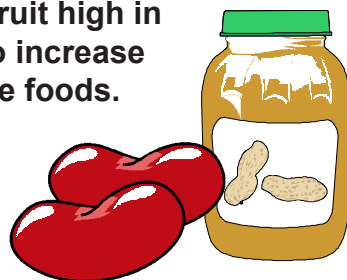
175 g/3/4 cup yogurt

2 slices/50 g processed cheese

Meat Alternatives

2 to 3 Servings Per Day

Include vegetables or fruit high in vitamin C with meals to increase iron absorption of these foods.



1 Serving

125-250 mL/1/2-1 cup cooked legumes

30-45 mL/2-3 tbsp nut or seed butter, such as peanut butter

45-60 mL/3-4 tbsp nuts or seeds

1 - 2 eggs

100 g/1/3 cup tofu or tempeh

70-80 g or 1 soy-based burger or wiener

250 mL/1 cup soy beverage

Sample Menus

Breakfast

3/4 cup 12-grain hot cereal topped with raisins and wheat germ
1 cup low fat milk or fortified soy beverage
1–2 slices whole wheat toast with apple butter or jelly
½ cup orange juice

Lunch

1 cup vegetable soup
Sandwich with hummus (chickpea and tahini spread), sprouts, and shredded carrot on whole grain roll
Red and green pepper sticks
1 banana
1 cup milk or fortified soy beverage

Dinner

1-2 cups pasta with sauteed kale, tomatoes, garlic, and herbs
½ - 1 cup marinated bean salad (kidney, chickpea, black, and green beans)
1 slice Italian bread
½ cup pineapple topped with a small scoop of low fat frozen yogurt

Snacks

Trail mix – dried apricots and figs, chopped almonds, roasted soybeans
Water

Breakfast

2 whole grain waffles with maple syrup
1-2 veggie breakfast sausages
½ cup fruit salad
1 cup milk or fortified soy beverage

Lunch

1 bean & cheese burrito topped with salsa
1 cup salad of mixed greens, red pepper, carrots, and cucumber, with fat reduced salad dressing
1 pear
2 fig cookies
1 cup milk or fortified soy beverage

Dinner

1 ½ cups vegetable stir fry with greens, carrots, mushrooms, and tofu
1 – 2 cups rice
¾ cup vanilla yogurt with sliced almonds and berries

Snacks

Lowfat popcorn
Fruit juice spritzer