

# The Vegetarian Way for Teens

If you've decided to become a vegetarian, you're not alone. There seems to be more teen vegetarians around. Some people do it because they think it's cool. But, most teens become vegetarians because of well thought-out reasons. Some do it because of environmental reasons, some because of their concerns about animals. If the reasons you have for being a vegetarian make sense to you, discuss them with your parents so they know what you're thinking.

Want to look good, as in healthy? Read this to find out about healthy vegetarian eating. If your family is concerned about you becoming vegetarian share this information with them so they know you plan on doing it right.

## What's In A Name?

Vegetarian eating styles usually vary in the extent to which they exclude animal products. Here are the most common vegetarian eating styles:

**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 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.

## Potential Pitfalls of a Vegetarian Diet

### Replacing meat with cheese

While cheese is a good source of protein, it does not supply iron or a significant amount of zinc, nutrients found in meat. Also, eating a lot of higher fat milk products may lead to 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 in 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 from all of the food groups to cover all of your nutrient needs.

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

Unfortified soy or rice beverages cannot compare to milk when it comes to calcium, riboflavin, or vitamins D, A and B<sub>12</sub>. You can buy fortified soy beverages. Check the labels of different brands carefully to see if they have added nutrients such as calcium, zinc, and vitamins D, B<sub>12</sub> and A.

## Eating too much junk food

Does your day look like this – a doughnut for breakfast; fries with gravy, chocolate bar and pop for lunch, then greasy fast-food pizza for dinner? If so, it's time to rethink your menu. These foods are okay to eat occasionally, but not as a steady diet.

# Vegetarian Nutrition 101

You may be tempted to skip this part, but don't. Even if you don't care about health, your parents probably do, and you may have to convince them that you are eating a healthy vegetarian diet. The following covers some of the key nutrients and their food sources you need to include in your eating plan.

## Protein

Protein is the first thing many people are concerned with in a vegetarian diet, but it's not the main nutrition concern. Protein is found in many foods. Eat a variety of vegetables, grains, and legumes and enough calories to maintain a healthy weight and your protein needs will be met.

### 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

Want good bones? Did you know that your bones take in the most calcium during your teen years and early twenties? If you include two to four servings of milk, cheese, or yogurt in your daily diet you will get plenty of calcium. If you don't eat milk products you can get calcium from other plant-based foods.

### Vegetarian Sources of Calcium

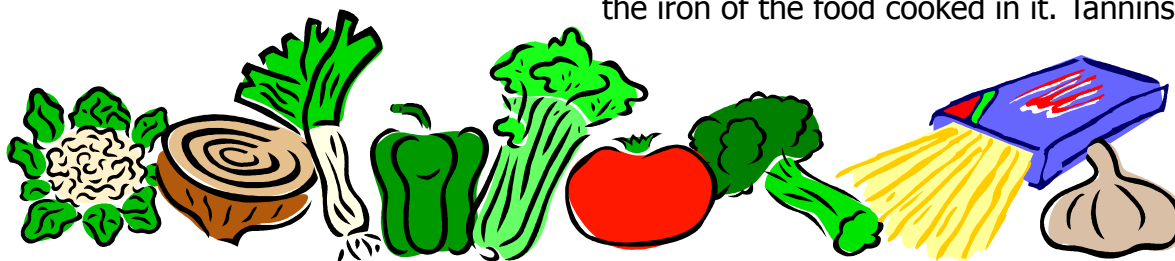
- ◆ Calcium fortified soy beverages
- ◆ Tofu processed with calcium (check the label)
- ◆ Kale
- ◆ Collards
- ◆ Mustard and turnip greens
- ◆ Broccoli
- ◆ Bok choy
- ◆ Okra
- ◆ Kidney beans
- ◆ Navy beans
- ◆ Chickpeas
- ◆ Sunflower and sesame seeds
- ◆ Tahini
- ◆ Blackstrap molasses
- ◆ Dried figs
-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

## 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. Diets low in iron can leave you feeling tired and weak. The iron in plant foods, called "non heme" iron, is absorbed differently than the "heme" iron in meat. Eat iron-rich vegetarian fare with food sources of vitamin C such as citrus fruit or juices, broccoli, tomatoes, and green and red peppers to increase iron absorption. 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 have them between meals rather than during a meal.

### Iron Rich Vegetarian Foods

- ◆ Roasted soybeans
- ◆ Pinto beans
- ◆ Chickpeas
- ◆ Lentils
- ◆ Tofu
- ◆ Whole and enriched grains and cereals
- ◆ 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

A problem 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 B<sub>12</sub>

This nutrient can be a challenge, especially if you are a vegan. Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> 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 find vitamin B<sub>12</sub> 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 B<sub>12</sub>. Some foods such as algae or spirulina should not be considered a reliable source of this vitamin. Look for the word "cyanocobalamin" on food labels or ingredient lists to be sure that the food product you are buying is a reliable source of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>.

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. 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.
- ◆ Eat enough calories to meet your energy needs and to maintain a healthy weight. This is your best bet for meeting your nutritional needs.
- ◆ Discover the kitchen. Get a vegetarian cookbook and try your hand at some of the recipes. While you're at it, 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.

# Expand Your Food Horizons

One of the cool things about being a vegetarian is that you get to try new foods. Be adventurous and explore some of these foods:

## Soy Products

Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP) – 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 food 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, and absorb the flavours of whatever they are cooked with.

Veggie burgers or wieners can be used as you would meat-based burgers and hot dogs. Look for ones that are fortified with extra vitamins and minerals such as vitamin B<sub>12</sub>.

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

## Beans, Beans, Beans

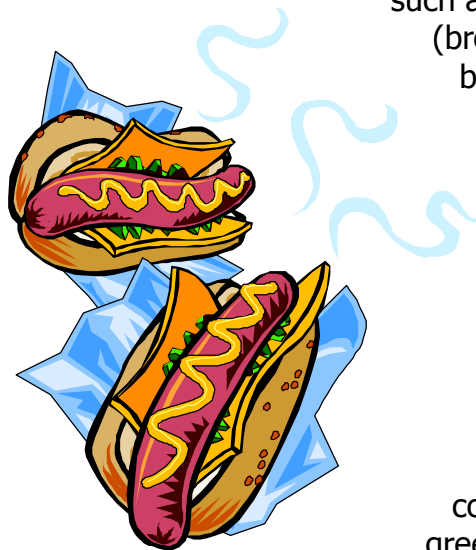
Most of us have had kidney beans or baked beans, but there are more to explore. Try black beans in burritos, lentils in soup or stew, and mashed chickpeas for a tasty sandwich spread. Often you can substitute legumes for the meat in recipes.

## Great Grains

With vegetarian meals, grains play a key role. Be willing to explore the different grains now 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, quinoa, spelt and amaranth.

## Vegetables

The 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 local public library or bookstores for vegetarian cookbooks. Some recommended reading includes:

**A Teen's Guide to Going Vegetarian** by J. Krizmanic. Penguin Books USA, 1994.

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

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



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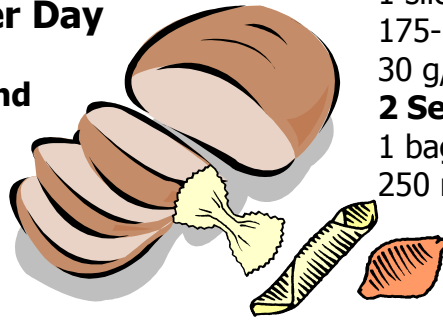
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# Vegetarian Food Guide

## Grain Products

5 to 12 servings Per Day

Choose whole grain and enriched products.



### 1 Serving

1 slice bread  
175-mL/ $\frac{3}{4}$  cup cooked cereal  
30 g/1oz 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.



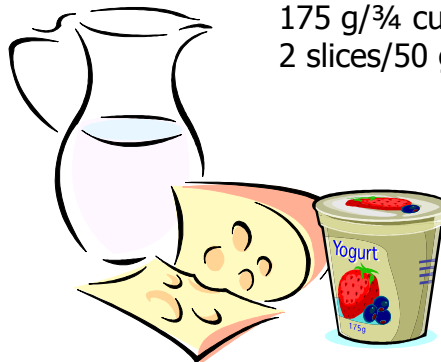
### 1 Serving

1 medium size vegetable or fruit  
125 mL/ $\frac{1}{2}$  cup fresh, frozen or canned vegetables or fruit  
250 mL/1 cup salad  
125 mL/ $\frac{1}{2}$  cup 100% vegetable or fruit juice

## Milk Products & Milk Alternatives

3 to 4 Servings Per Day

Choose lower fat milk products and milk alternatives more often. Choose soy beverages that are fortified with calcium, vitamin B<sub>12</sub> and vitamin D.



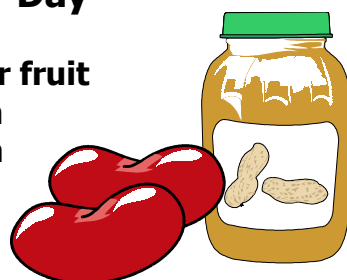
### 1 Serving

250 mL/1 cup cow's milk or fortified soy beverage  
50 g cheese  
175 g/ $\frac{3}{4}$  cup yogurt  
2 slices/50 g processed cheese

## Meat Alternatives

2 to 3 Servings Per Day

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



### 1 Serving

125-250 mL/ $\frac{1}{2}$ -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 and seeds  
1 - 2 eggs  
100 g/ $\frac{1}{3}$  cup tofu or tempeh  
70-80 g or 1 vegetarian burger or wiener  
250 mL/1 cup soy milk

# What's On the Menu?

Here's what a sample one-day menu might look like.

## Food Group

### Breakfast

Bowl of whole grain cereal topped  
with raisins..... grain, fruit  
1 cup of low fat milk or fortified  
soy beverage ..... milk or milk alternative  
1- 2 slices multigrain toast with ..... grain  
1- 2 Tbsp. peanut or almond butter ..... meat alternative  
½ cup orange juice..... fruit

### Snack

Trail mix – dried apricots, figs, raisins ..... fruit  
Roasted soybeans & pumpkin seeds ..... meat alternative

### Lunch

1 veggie burger ..... meat alternative  
1 burger bun ..... grain  
Toppings of lettuce, tomato, sprouts ..... vegetable  
1 cup mixed green salad ..... vegetable  
1 pear ..... fruit  
Fruit juice spritzer

### Dinner

Vegetarian chili made with beans, ..... meat alternative  
peppers, tomatoes, zucchini, onions,  
carrots, celery ..... vegetable  
Topped with cheese made from milk or soy ..... milk or milk alternative  
Handful of baked tortilla chips ..... grain  
½ cup fresh fruit salad with ..... fruit  
Low fat frozen yogurt..... milk or milk alternative  
1 cup of low fat milk or fortified  
soy beverage..... milk or milk alternative

### Snack

Banana-strawberry smoothie ..... fruit  
made with milk or fortified soy beverage ..... milk or milk alternative  
Small whole grain muffin ..... grain