

Vegetarian Diet

What is a vegetarian diet?

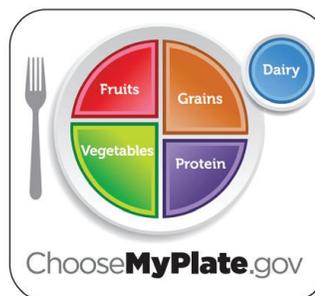
This diet does not include meat and some, or all, other animal foods. There are many types of vegetarians:

- **Vegans.** No food from animals. This includes red meat, milk, cheese, honey, eggs, fish and poultry. Poultry includes chicken, turkey and other bird meat.
- **Lacto-vegetarians.** No red meat, eggs, fish or poultry. Will drink milk and eat milk products.
- **Lacto-ovo-vegetarians.** No meat, fish or poultry. Will drink milk and eat milk products and eggs.
- **Flexitarians** (semi-vegetarians). Follows a plant-based diet. Will sometimes eat small amounts of fish, poultry, and red meat.

What do I need to eat to have a healthy diet?

As long as you get the proper nutrients, being a vegetarian is not harmful. Your diet should include all the food groups. Visit myplate.gov for more information on these food groups.

- Grains
- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Dairy or dairy substitutes
- Protein foods
- Oils



What are healthy substitutes for vegans?

You will need to find substitutes for dairy products and eggs. They include:

- **Milk/Dairy.** Soymilk, soy yogurt, hemp milk, flax milk, coconut milk, almond milk, rice milk or cashew milk.
- **Butter.** When cooking, use olive oil, water or vegetable broth. There are also vegan spreads available on the market. When baking, use oils, flaxmeal or applesauce.
- **Eggs.** Egg substitutes or tofu. One egg= ¼ cup of whipped tofu + 3 tablespoons of water.
- **Cheese.** Cheese alternatives.

What important nutrients might I be missing?

Calcium, iron, protein, vitamin D, vitamin B12 and Zinc may be lacking in a vegetarian diet. Extra planning is needed to be sure these are in your diet daily.

- **Calcium.** You need calcium for strong bones and teeth. If you use enough milk products you will get enough calcium. Other plant sources that are high in calcium include green leafy vegetables, such as spinach, broccoli and turnip greens. Tofu, soy milk and juices with added calcium are also good sources.

- **Vitamin D.** This vitamin is important to get calcium into bones. Cow's milk is a great source of Vitamin D. Sunlight helps the body produce Vitamin D. If you do not drink milk, daily sunlight will help. Vegans can also drink soy milk or eat cereals with added Vitamin D.
- **Iron.** Iron is important for red blood cells. It is very high in meat products. Other good sources include beans, peas, lentils, dark green vegetables and dried fruit. You should also make sure you get enough Vitamin C. Vitamin C helps your body absorb iron. Strawberries, citrus fruits, and tomatoes are some foods high in Vitamin C.
- **Protein.** You need protein for healthy skin, bones, muscle and organs. If you eat eggs and milk you will get enough protein. If not, other ways to get enough protein are by eating a diet high in soy products, legumes, nuts, seeds, meat substitutes and tofu.
- **Vitamin B12.** Vitamin B12 is important for your body to make red blood cells. Most often, this is found in animal products. You can get Vitamin B12 from cereals or soy products that have added vitamin B12.
- **Zinc.** Zinc helps wounds heal. Foods high in zinc include whole grains, nuts and soy products.

Girls need to be very careful about getting enough iron, as they lose it when they have their periods. They also need to watch how much calcium they are taking as they are prone to weak bones (osteoporosis).

Should I be taking vitamins?

If you are not getting enough of the nutrients listed above, it is a good idea to take a multivitamin. During the winter months, when you get less sunlight, it is a good idea to take a multivitamin that has vitamin D.

How do I get started with meal planning?

- Make a list of meals that do not have meat such as spaghetti with tomato sauce.
- Make meals that you could use a meat-free product or easily make meat-free. For example, in chili add extra beans, or use tofu instead of meat.
- Read vegetarian cookbooks for other meal ideas.
- Try ethnic restaurants to find new vegetarian meals.
- Meet with a dietitian for more ideas.

Other helpful information

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-tips/tips-for-vegetarian.html>

ALERT: Call your doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if you have special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.