



MISSION: Healthy Kids

Vegetarian Diet

What is a vegetarian diet?

A vegetarian 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.
- **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.** Follow a plant-based diet. Will sometimes eat small amounts of fish, poultry and red meat.

A vegetarian eating pattern can be a healthy option for kids and adults. The key is to consume a variety of foods and the right amount of foods to meet your calorie and nutrient needs. Your diet should include all the food groups: grains, vegetables, fruits, dairy or dairy substitutes, proteins and healthy fats.

What important nutrients does a vegetarian need to pay attention to?

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 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.

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, but 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.

missionhealthykids.org

A partnership of

More helpful information can be found on

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

