

# 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:

**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.

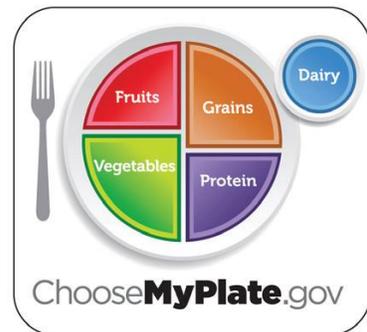
**Flexitarians** (semi-vegetarians). Follows a plant-based diet. Will sometimes eat small amounts of fish, poultry, and red meat.

## What is a vegan diet?

A vegan diet removes all food from animals from their diet. This includes all meat such as pork products or beef products, milk, yogurt, cheese, eggs and poultry like chicken and turkey. Vegans also may not eat honey because it is made by bees.

## What does a vegetarian or vegan 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](http://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. Some include:

**Milk and 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 =  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of whipped tofu + 3 tablespoons of water.

**Cheese:** Cheese alternatives like rice cheese or nutritional yeast.

## What important nutrients might be missing?

Calcium, iron, protein, vitamin D, vitamin B12 and Zinc may be lacking in a vegetarian or vegan 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 plant based milk that has vitamin D added to it 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, beans, 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 supports the immune system. Foods high in zinc include whole grains, nuts and soy products.

### What about vitamin and mineral supplements?

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. If you are a vegan, taking a vitamin B12 supplement is likely needed.

### 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 sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.**