



Resources

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Eating Guidelines for Vegans

Information about a Vegan Diet

- A vegan eating pattern is based on grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes (dried beans, peas and lentils), seeds and nuts. It excludes meat, fish, poultry, dairy and eggs or products containing these foods and any other animal products.
- A vegan eating pattern has many potential health benefits. They include lower rates of obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer. Other benefits include lower blood cholesterol levels and a lower risk for gallstones and intestinal problems.
- This eating pattern can take some extra planning. Vegans must make sure that enough nutrients like protein, iron, zinc, calcium, vitamins D and B12 and omega-3 fats are included.
- A well planned vegan diet can meet all of these needs. It is safe and healthy for pregnant and breastfeeding women, babies, children, teens and seniors.
- A variety of plant foods eaten during the day can provide enough protein to promote and maintain good health.

Steps You Can Take

Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide- www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide can help you make sure that your diet is healthy and includes all of the key nutrients.

Include vegan sources of:

Protein

Protein is key in building and keeping muscles and red blood cells healthy. It supports growth all through the life cycle. Good sources of protein include:

- Soy and soy products like tofu and fortified soy drinks.
- Meat alternatives like textured vegetable protein (TVP) and veggie burgers.
- Dried beans, peas and lentils like kidney, black and white beans, chickpeas and black-eyed peas and red, brown and green lentils.
- Grains, nuts and seeds.

Iron

Iron helps carry oxygen to different parts of the body. Iron can be better absorbed by including vitamin C rich foods like citrus fruits and juices, kiwi, mango, melons, potatoes, sweet peppers, broccoli and some green leafy vegetables with meals. Remember, vegetarians need about twice as much iron. Vegetarians should choose several iron-rich plant sources daily. Good sources of iron include:

- Soy and soy products like firm or extra firm tofu and fortified soy drinks.
- Meat alternatives like textured vegetable protein (TVP) and veggie burgers.
- Dried beans, peas and lentils like kidney, pinto and adzuki beans, chickpeas and black-eyed peas, and red, brown and green lentils.
- Fortified grain products, nuts and seeds like almonds and sesame seeds.
- Fruits like prunes, raisins and apricots and dark green vegetables like collards, okra and bok choy.
- Blackstrap molasses.

Vitamin B12

Vitamin B12 is important for making red blood cells and helping the body to use fats. Good sources of vitamin B12 include:

- Red Star nutritional yeast.
- Fortified soy and other fortified non-dairy drinks.
- Fortified meat alternatives like TVP and veggie burgers.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D helps the body to absorb calcium and phosphorus and helps bones and teeth use these minerals. Good sources of vitamin D include:

- Fortified soy and other fortified non-dairy drinks.
- Soft margarines.

Calcium

Calcium helps bones to grow and stay healthy. It also helps muscles to contract and the heart to beat. Good sources of calcium include:

- Fortified soy drinks and products like soy yogurts and calcium-set tofu.
- Soybeans, navy beans and white beans.
- Nuts and nut products like almonds and almond butter.
- Seeds and seed products like sesame seeds and their butter (tahini).
- Blackstrap molasses.
- Vegetables such as bok choy, okra, collard greens and turnip greens.
- Fruits like figs and fortified orange juice.

Zinc

Zinc is needed for growth. It helps the body to protect itself from disease and heal wounds. Good sources of zinc include:

- Soy and soy products like tofu and fortified soy drinks.
- Dried beans, peas and lentils.
- Nuts and seeds and their butters like peanuts and peanut butter, sesame seeds and their butter (tahini) and others like pecans, cashews, pumpkin and flax seed.
- Whole grains and fortified cereals.

Linolenic acid (omega-3 fat)

Omega-3 fats are helpful in preventing heart disease and important for eye, nerve and brain development. Good sources of omega-3 fats include:

- Oils like canola, flax seed, walnut and soybean.
- Ground flax seed.
- Soybeans, tofu and walnuts.

Steps for Special Consideration

Pregnant and breastfeeding women should make sure to follow Canada's Food Guide, choosing a variety of healthy foods. Special attention should be paid to include good sources of vitamin B12, iron and omega-3 fats daily. These nutrients are found in a small amount of foods but are important during this time of growth. If you are pregnant talk to your doctor about a daily prenatal vitamin that includes iron and vitamin B12. All women thinking of becoming pregnant or are pregnant should take a multivitamin daily which includes 400 micrograms of folic acid, to help prevent birth defects.

People over the age of 50, need more calcium, vitamin D and B12. A greater focus on the foods that have these nutrients is needed. People over 50 should include three servings of fortified soy or rice beverage each day to help meet calcium needs. Canada's Food Guide states that people over 50 should take 400 IU of vitamin D from a supplement each day. They should also get vitamin B12 from fortified foods or a supplement. A daily multivitamin-mineral supplement will help meet these extra needs.

Additional Resources

- Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide
- ***Becoming Vegan: The complete guide to adopting a healthy plantbased diet***, by Brenda Davis, R.D. and Vesanto Melina, M.S., R.D.
- For nutrition answers, recipes, meal plans and vegetarian info visit: The Vegetarian Resource Group at www.vrg.org
- For hundreds of vegan and vegetarian recipes: <http://vegweb.com/index.php?action=recipes>

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