

Nutrition Facts

Vegetarian Eating

What does it mean to be a vegetarian?

A person who is a vegetarian excludes some type of animal products from their diet. There are different types of vegetarians:

Type	Foods That are Eaten	Foods That are Not Eaten
Lacto vegetarian ¹	Milk and dairy products, vegetables, fruits, grains, legumes, seeds, nuts	Meat, fish, poultry, eggs or products containing these foods
Lacto-ovo vegetarian ¹	Milk and dairy products, eggs, vegetables, fruits, grains, legumes, seeds, nuts	Meat, fish, poultry or products containing these foods
Vegan ¹	Vegetables, fruits, grains, legumes, seeds, nuts, plant-based beverages	Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, milk and dairy products, honey or products containing these foods

Are there any health benefits to being a vegetarian?

A well-planned vegetarian diet may help to lower the risk for developing heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol and certain types of cancer¹.

However, a vegetarian diet includes more than just vegetables. A vegetarian diet can be healthy and provide all the nutrients needed for a healthy active lifestyle, but it takes good planning.

Planning a Vegan Diet:

1. Use [Canada's Food Guide](#) to help you plan your meals.
2. Choose a variety of nutritious foods including vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods, and protein foods.
3. Choose plant-based protein foods such as beans and legumes, nuts and seeds, soy products and unsweetened fortified soy beverage. This will help to ensure you get all the nutrients your body needs.

¹ UnlockFood. (2018, October 22). What you need to know about a healthy vegetarian eating plan. Retrieved from <https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Vegetarian-and-Vegan-Diets/What-You-Need-to-Know-About-a-Healthy-Vegetarian-E.aspx>

² Dietitians of Canada. (2014, November 27). *Healthy Eating Guidelines for Vegans*. Retrieved from <http://www.dietitians.ca>

Key Nutrients

Depending on the vegetarian diet you follow, you need to pay attention to certain nutrients. The nutrients below can be more difficult to get from vegetarian diets because they usually come from animal products. Note: some of the foods below are not appropriate for all vegetarian diets.

Nutrient	Why do we need it?	Foods
Protein ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps to build and keep muscles and red blood cells healthy. Supports growth throughout the life cycle. 	Milk and dairy products, unsweetened fortified soy beverage, soy products (e.g., tofu), eggs, beans, lentils, seeds, nuts, whole grains (e.g., quinoa or buckwheat)
Iron ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps carry oxygen from the lungs to different parts of the body. Helps all cells in the body work properly. 	Beans, lentils, seeds, soy, dried fruit, leafy green vegetables, whole grain or fortified cereals, breads and pastas
Calcium ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps to build strong bones and teeth. Helps muscles to contract and the heart to beat. 	Milk, dairy products, some* fortified plant-based beverages, fortified orange juice, tofu (made with calcium), dark green leafy vegetables, almonds (*Not all plant-based beverages are fortified with calcium. To see if a product contains calcium, check the Nutrition Facts on the food label)
Vitamin D ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps to build strong bones and teeth. 	Cow's milk, some* fortified plant-based beverages, fresh or canned salmon and sardines, margarine, egg yolks (*Not all plant-based beverages are fortified with vitamin D. To see if a product contains vitamin D, check the Nutrition Facts on the food label)
Zinc ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needed for growth. Helps the body to protect itself from disease and to heal wounds. 	Beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, whole grains, cow's milk, eggs, cheese, yogurt
Vitamin B ₁₂ ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps to make red blood cells. 	Fish, eggs, cow's milk, cheese, some* fortified plant-based beverages and meat substitutes (e.g. textured vegetable protein), Red Star nutritional yeast (*Not all plant-based beverages or meat substitutes are fortified with vitamin B12. To see if a product contains vitamin B12 check the Nutrition Facts on the food label)
Omega-3 Fatty Acids ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduces inflammation in the body. Important for heart health. 	Fish, omega-3 eggs, walnuts, canola oil, soybean oil

If you are worried that you are missing key nutrients, dietitians are available to help you plan a healthy vegetarian diet. Talk to your doctor or a Registered Dietitian from TeleHealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000.

For more information

- Dietitians of Canada – www.dietitians.ca
- UnlockFood.ca – www.unlockfood.ca
- Vegetarian Resource Group – www.vrg.org
- Vegetarian Recipes – www.vegweb.com/recipes



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