



## Patient Information

# Vegetarian and Vegan diets: How to get the best nutrition

## Introduction

The term vegetarian can mean different things to different people. There are 3 main types of Vegetarian:

- Lacto-ovo vegetarians - exclude meat, fish and poultry but eat dairy products and eggs.
- Lacto vegetarians - exclude meat, fish, poultry and eggs as well as foods containing them but still eat dairy products.
- Vegans - exclude meat, fish, poultry, eggs, dairy products and any other animal products.

Some vegetarians may eat different combinations of these foods, for example some may avoid meat but eat fish.

Vegetarian and vegan diets can be a healthy way of living as long as a variety of sources are used as replacements for meat and fish. This leaflet will help you to choose the right foods as part of a healthy vegetarian or vegan diet.

## Meat alternatives

- **Choose at least 2 servings per day:**
- Include soya, beans, peas, lentils, nuts, seeds, eggs, Quorn.
- It is important to get protein from a variety of sources to get a mix of amino acids which are used to build and repair cells.
- Pulses (beans, lentils) are a low fat source of protein, fibre, vitamins and minerals. They also count as 1 of your 5-a-day.
- Examples of 1 serving: 1 egg, 60g (2oz) Soya mince, ½ tin of baked beans (207g/7oz) or 3 tablespoons of kidney beans, chick peas or lentils.

This information sheet is available in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email [pals.team@gwh.nhs.uk](mailto:pals.team@gwh.nhs.uk)



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## Starchy Carbohydrates

- **Include at least one serving of these foods at each meal:**
- Aim for 6-8 servings per day
- Examples of 1 serving:
  - 1 slice of bread – wholemeal or granary
  - 3 tablespoons breakfast cereal or small bowl of porridge.
  - 2-3 new potatoes
  - 2-3 tablespoons pasta, rice, couscous, quinoa or buckwheat (cooked).

## Dairy Products

- **Aim for 2 to 3 of these foods each day:**
- Examples of 1 serving:
  - 200ml of milk or calcium enriched soya milk.
  - 30g (1oz) cheese or 90g (3oz) Cottage cheese
  - 150g (5oz) or pot of yogurt or fromage frais.
- For a vegan diet choose calcium enriched soya, rice or oat drinks.

## Fruit and Vegetables

- **Try to include at least 5 servings a day:**
- Examples of 1 serving:
  - 1 average apple, orange, banana
  - 2 pieces small fruits - plums, kiwi fruit
  - 1 cup of strawberries, raspberries or grapes
  - 1 tablespoon dried fruit
  - 1 small glass of fruit juice
  - 2-3 heaped tablespoons of vegetables.

## Fats

- Margarines, oils, nuts and seed pastes should be used in moderation as these are all high in fat.
- Use small quantities of polyunsaturated or monounsaturated oils such as sunflower, corn, rapeseed or olive oil.
- Some vegetarian foods may still be high in fat and saturated fat, such as vegetarian pasties, and deep fried foods. Limit intake of these foods.

## Are you eating enough?

### How to increase Calcium and Vitamin D intake while following a vegan diet?

Calcium is important to keep bones and teeth healthy. Vitamin D is essential for the absorption of calcium. Good sources of calcium: fortified soya, rice or oat milk, calcium set tofu, sesame seeds and tahini' pulses, brown and white bread' and dried fruit. Major sources of vitamin D: exposure to sunlight, fortified fat spreads and cereals, vitamin D supplements (purchased at pharmacy or prescribed).



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## How can I increase my Iron intake?

Iron is needed for healthy blood. Good sources include: eggs, pulses (beans and lentils), fortified cereals, wholemeal bread, dark green vegetables, dried fruit, nuts and seeds. To help your body absorb iron from plants foods, include a source of Vitamin C with your meal e.g. vegetables, fruit or a glass of fruit juice.

## How can I increase my Vitamin B12 intake?

Vitamin B 12 is needed for growth, repair and general health. Good sources include milk, cheese, eggs, fortified yeast extracts e.g. Marmite and vegemite, fortified breakfast cereals and fortified soya products.

## How can I increase my omega-3 fatty acid intake?

Omega-3 fatty acids are needed for a healthy heart. Good sources include: flaxseed oil, rapeseed oil, soya oil and soya based foods e.g. tofu, walnuts and Omega-3 fortified eggs.

## Ideas for meals, snacks and desserts

### Meals

- Vegetable and bean casserole, chilli or curry
- Shepherds pie made from lentils, soya or quorn
- Nut roast, lentil loaf or vegetarian sausages

### Served with potato, bread, rice or pasta and vegetables or salad

- Sandwiches with eggs, peanut butter, quorn slices, vegetarian paté, hummus, tahini or cheese
- Vegeburger with pitta bread and salad
- Jacket potato with baked beans, chilli bean filling or cheese
- Lentil or split pea soup with a salad filled roll.

### Desserts

- Fresh, stewed or tinned fruit in natural juice with yoghurt, ice cream or sorbet
- Fruit crumble (include some wholemeal flour or oats)
- Baked apple, filled with dried fruit and served with custard.

### Snacks

- Fresh, tinned fruit or dried fruit (apricots, prunes) and nuts
- Glass of milk, pot of yoghurt or fromage frais
- Pitta bread or vegetables (carrots, cucumber) with hummus
- Fruit cake, date slice, banana cake, flap jack or cereal bar



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## Vegetarian food sources

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Tofu:</b>              | A soft curd made from soya beans (a little like cheese). Can be used in main dishes or in desserts.  |
| <b>Tempeh:</b>            | A meat alternative made from beans ripened with a special mould. It has a firm nutty texture and is dairy, salt and gluten free. Usually available in some health foods shops and often available as a frozen product. |
| <b>Quorn:</b>             | A meat substitute made from a type of mushroom. It is high in protein and low in fat. It is available in different forms including steaks, slices, mince, burgers and sausages.  |
| <b>Miso:</b>              | A paste made from fermented soya beans, barley or rice and salt. Use for stocks and flavouring. Serving size is 1 teaspoon (5g).   |
| <b>Tamari:</b>            | A soya sauce made from whole soya beans. It is wheat and gluten free and can be used to flavour food instead of salt.  |
| <b>Vegetarian Cheese:</b> | Cheese made with non-animal rennet.  |
| <b>Tartex:</b>            | A yeast paté, available plain, with tomatoes, peppers, herbs and garlic and mushrooms. Can be used in recipes or as a spread on toast or crackers.   |
| <b>Natex:</b>             | A yeast extract.   |

## Vegetarian cooking

### Cooking hints

- Dried beans, peas or whole lentils will cook much more quickly if soaked in water overnight.
- Drain the soaked pulses and place in a large pan with plenty of water.
- Bring to the boil and cook the pulses at boiling temperature for 10 minutes. Simmer until cooked.
- Cooking times may vary according to the type of beans, the quantity being cooked and how old the beans are.
- Pressure cooking reduces the time taken, however **beans must be boiled for 10 minutes beforehand.**
- Cooked pulses can be frozen.
- You may like to try the tinned, ready cooked varieties, (choose beans canned in water).
- Add seasoning after cooking as salt, tomatoes and lemon juice will toughen the pulses.



# Vegetarian and Vegan diets: How to get the best nutrition

## Food labelling

There is now guidance from the Food Standards Agency for manufacturers to follow when labelling products vegetarian or vegan. Many manufacturers will state whether a food product is suitable for a vegetarian or vegan diet. However, the vegetarian and vegan society also have trademark logos which appear on the labels of approved foods.



## Vegetarian meals on a budget

Planning in advance and shopping carefully can help you to eat a vegetarian diet on a budget.

- Write a list before shopping to prevent impulse purchases.
- Buy foods that are in season as these may be cheaper.
- Buy frozen and tinned fruit and vegetables – these can be cheaper and last longer. Choose tinned fruit in juice not syrup.
- Take advantage of reduced price items - they can be frozen on day of purchase until needed.
- Prepare meals in bulk and freeze the extra portions for another day.

To help you vary your diet, look out for new recipes online or purchase one of a wide variety of vegetarian cookbooks available. Alternatively, libraries may hold a range of vegetarian cookbooks.

## Frequently asked questions:

### Do Vegetarians and vegans need vitamin supplements?

All the nutrients you need can be obtained through a healthy balanced diet. If your diet is not balanced you could be missing out on vital nutrients and may need a supplement.

### Are Quorn products suitable for vegans?

No. All Quorn products contain a small amount of egg white and most contain milk ingredients.

### Can children and babies eat a vegetarian diet?

If you are bringing up your child on a diet without meat or without any food from animals, they will need two or three portions of vegetable protein or nuts every day to give them enough protein and iron. You also need to make sure they get enough calcium, vitamin B12 and vitamin D. Vitamin drops are important in vegetarian and vegan children between 6 months and 5 years old.



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## Useful addresses

The Vegetarian Society  
Parkdale  
Dunham Road  
Altrincham, Cheshire  
Tel: (0161) 925 2000  
[www.vegsoc.org.uk](http://www.vegsoc.org.uk)

The Vegan Society  
33-35 George Street  
Oxford  
OX1 2AY  
[www.vegansociety.com](http://www.vegansociety.com)

## Contact details:

Nutrition and Dietetics Department,  
Royal United Hospital 01225 824398,  
St Martins Hospital 01225 833916,  
Chippenham Hospital 01249 456512