



A Guide to Vegetarian Eating

A well balanced vegetarian diet meets healthy eating recommendations and is nutritionally adequate for all stages of life including childhood, adolescence, pregnancy and lactation. A healthy vegetarian diet is one that includes a wide variety of wholegrains, fruit, vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds, plus dairy foods and/or eggs if not vegan.

Main Types of Vegetarians

Lacto-ovo-vegetarians include dairy and eggs in their diet but exclude animal flesh

Lacto-vegetarians include dairy in their diet but exclude eggs and animal flesh

Ovo-vegetarians include eggs in their diet but exclude dairy and animal flesh

Vegans exclude all animal-derived foods from their diet including eggs and dairy and generally honey

(see the DAA Vegetarian Interest Group 'A Guide to Vegan Eating' Fact sheet for more information)

Important Nutrients for Vegetarians

Protein

Important for growth and repair of all body cells, formation of enzymes and hormones, normal functioning of muscles and nerves and immune protection

Food sources: Legumes (eg. beans, lentils, chickpeas), soy foods (eg. tofu, tempeh, soy milk, soy yoghurt), textured vegetable protein (TVP), eggs, nuts and seeds, dairy foods (eg. milk, yoghurt and cheese), wholegrains (eg. quinoa, amaranth grain, brown rice)

Tip: You do not need to combine proteins at each meal, simply consume a variety of proteins throughout the day and have an adequate energy intake.

Iron

Important for oxygen transport around the body

Food sources: Legumes, iron-fortified foods (eg. breads and cereals), tofu and tempeh, nuts, seeds, green leafy vegetables, eggs, dried fruit, wholegrains (eg. quinoa, amaranth grain, brown rice, rolled oats)

Tips to increase iron absorption:

- Consume foods high in vitamin C (eg. citrus fruits and juices, strawberries, kiwi fruit, tomatoes, broccoli, capsicum) with meals
- Avoid drinking tea and coffee with meals (tannins in tea and coffee inhibit iron absorption)
- Avoid taking calcium supplements with meals

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Calcium

Important for strong bones and teeth, proper nerve and muscle function and blood clotting

Food Sources: Dairy foods, calcium-fortified foods (eg. soy, nut, oat and rice milks and fruit juices), almonds, brazil nuts, sesame seeds, unhulled tahini (sesame seed paste), amaranth grain, dried apricots, figs, soybeans, calcium set-tofu, Asian greens, kale, collard greens, broccoli

Tips to increase absorption of calcium:

- Ensure adequate vitamin D (see below)
- Limit salt intake - salt increases calcium excretion
- Limit caffeine intake - caffeine (in tea, coffee, cola and 'high energy drinks) inhibits calcium absorption
- Phytic acid (in bran and raw vegetables) inhibits absorption so have some of your vegetables cooked and choose wholegrain breads and cereals instead of adding bran



Zinc

Found in every part of our body and has a wide range of functions. It is important for growth and development, wound healing, healthy skin and a strong immune system

Food Sources: Legumes, wholegrains (eg. quinoa, amaranth grain, brown rice wheatgerm, rolled oats), nuts, seeds, eggs, cheese, cow's milk and soy products (eg. tofu, tempeh, soy milk, soy yoghurt), zinc-fortified breakfast cereal

Tips to increase zinc absorption:

- Soak legumes before cooking or use canned legumes
- Consume sprouted beans, grains and seeds and bread that contains yeast
- Consume foods containing organic acids such as citric acid (in fruit and vegetables) at meals

Vitamin D

Helps with calcium absorption into bones and is important for the immune system

Food Sources: Eggs, vitamin D mushrooms, vitamin D-fortified foods (margarine and some milks). Vitamin D is also obtainable by the action of sunlight on bare skin



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Omega-3

Plays a critical role in good health and protection against disease

Food Sources: Flaxseed oil, chia seed oil, hemp seeds, walnuts, canola oil, soybeans, seaweed, tofu, eggs (omega-rich eggs are also available), chia seeds, flaxseeds/linseeds (stored in the fridge), omega-3 fortified soy milks (soy milk that has omega-3 added)

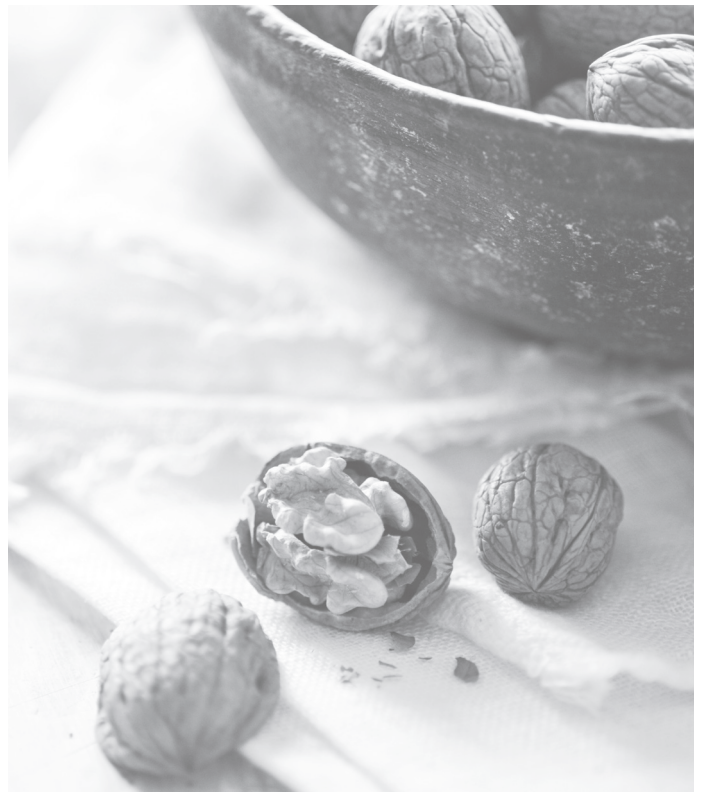
Tips to achieve optimal intake ratio of essential fatty acids:

- Consume foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids
- Increase omega-3 consumption and reduce omega-6 consumption by replacing sunflower, safflower & corn oils with canola, soybean or olive oil

Vitamin B12

Required for cell division, the formation of red blood cells and maintenance of the nervous system

Food Sources: Dairy foods (eg. milk, yoghurt and cheese), eggs, B12-fortified foods (eg. some soy milk, meat analogues, veggie burgers, Marmite™ that have had vitamin B12 added). A vitamin B12 supplement will be needed if these foods are not eaten regularly, especially for those following a vegan diet. .



Iodine

Essential for human growth and development and production of thyroid hormones

Food Sources: Dairy products, eggs, iodised salt, nori

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Vegetarian Meal Ideas

Breakfast

- Wholegrain cereal, muesli or porridge with soy or cow's milk, yoghurt and berries with a tablespoon of ground flaxseeds or chia seeds
- Wholegrain toast with nut butter, avocado and sliced tomato or Marmite™
- Wholegrain toast with canola or olive oil spread and a poached egg

Lunch

- Wholegrain salad sandwich with lettuce, tomato, cucumber, avocado, baby spinach with or without cheese
- Vegetable and legume soup with a slice of wholegrain toast
- Veggie burger on a wholegrain roll with salad
- Falafel roll with lettuce, tomato, onion, hummus and cheese (soy or dairy) on wholemeal pita bread
- Pizza – wholemeal pita bread spread with tomato paste & topped with tomato, capsicum, mushroom and a sprinkle of cheese (soy or dairy)

Dinner

- Tofu or tempeh and vegetable stir fry with cashews and brown rice
- Tacos or burritos filled beans, textured vegetable protein (TVP) or tofu, salad, avocado and salsa
- Chickpea and vegetable curry served with cup brown rice and a sprinkle of nuts
- Pasta with a tomato based vegetable and lentil or TVP sauce (eg lentils or TVP, mushrooms, onion, zucchini and capsicum)

Snacks

- Banana or berry smoothie (made with low fat cow's milk or fortified soy milk, low fat yoghurt, fruit and chia seeds).
- Dried fruit, nut and seed mix (eg dried apricots with almonds sunflower seeds and pumpkin seeds)
- Fresh fruit
- Yoghurt (soy or dairy)
- Vegetable sticks (eg carrot, celery, capsicum) with hummus
- Milo® (made on low fat cow's milk or vitamin B12 and calcium-fortified soy milk)
- Wholegrain crackers or rice cakes with Marmite™, peanut butter, hummus, tahini, avocado or cheese and tomato
- Slice of wholegrain toast or English muffin with grilled cheese and tomato
- Raisin toast with canola or olive oil spread

'This information is provided for education purposes and does not constitute DAA endorsement of a particular branded product or service'. There may be additional products/services that are also appropriate choices.'



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This information has been independently reviewed by the Dietitians Association of Australia. For expert nutrition and dietary advice contact an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD). Visit 'Find an Accredited Practising Dietitian' at www.daa.asn.au or call 1800 812 942.