



Wellness Center

Lake Shore Campus · Granada Center 310
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VEGETARIAN/VEGAN DIETS

Vegetarian and vegan diets limit or eliminate animal protein foods. There are many health benefits to eating more plant-based protein when done in a balanced way. Plant-based diets can help reduce the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. There are also global sustainability benefits to eating more plant based. When switching to a plant-based diet, it is important to rely on whole foods instead of processed foods, as processed foods can be higher in calories, sugar, trans/saturated fats, and sodium. Those on a vegan or vegetarian diet may be at a higher risk of nutrient deficiencies, therefore it is imperative that a wide variety of foods and balanced meals are consumed regularly.

If you are considering transitioning to a vegan or vegetarian diet, start by gradually reducing animal products and incorporating more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and plant-based proteins. Some easy ways to make sure you are meeting your nutrient needs is by replacing meats in meals you already enjoy with alternative plant-based protein sources. Try looking online for vegetarian or vegan recipes. If it is difficult to meet nutrient needs through diet alone, it may be recommended to begin taking dietary supplements.

Eating a Balanced Diet:

Eating a balanced diet following MyPlate guidelines is still important when eating vegan or vegetarian. MyPlate guidelines recommend that daily intake should include:

- 2-3 cups vegetables- include a variety of red, orange, and dark-green vegetables
- 2 cups of fruit- include fresh, frozen, canned (in water), dried, and 100% fruit juice
- 6-8 oz equivalents of grains- make 50% of total grain intake whole grains
- 3 cups of dairy or calcium-rich foods- include milk, yogurt, cheese, dark leafy greens, and/or fortified plant milks
- 5-6.5 oz equivalents of high protein foods (see below table)
- 6-7 teaspoons of oils- include mono- and poly-unsaturated oils such as olive oil, vegetable oils, avocados, and nuts

High protein foods:

It is recommended for adults to get between 5-6.5 oz equivalents of protein per day.

Amounts that count as a 1-ounce equivalent in the Protein Foods Groups:

- ¼ cup cooked beans (black, kidney, pinto, white)
- ¼ cup cooked peas (chickpeas, lentils, split peas)
- ¼ cup baked beans, refried beans
- ¼ cup (about 2 oz) tofu
- 1 oz tempeh, cooked
- ¼ cup roasted soybeans
- 1 falafel patty (2.25 inch, 4 oz)
- 2 Tablespoons hummus
- ½ oz nuts (12 almonds, 24 pistachios, 7 walnut halves)
- ½ oz of seeds (pumpkin, sunflower, squash seeds)
- 1 Tbsp peanut butter or almond butter
- 1 Egg

Most dairy products and some alternative milks/dairy products also contain protein. Check labels for nutrition information.



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Potential deficiencies:

Since vegan and vegetarian diets limit or exclude animal products this means there are some vitamins and minerals to pay special attention to. In some instances, a dietary supplement may be necessary, please consult with your healthcare provider before starting a supplement.

- Vitamin D: Found in fortified soy milk, mushrooms; or by 15-30 min of sunlight exposure per day
- Vitamin B12: Highest amounts found in animal products, vegans may need to consider a supplement. Found in small amounts in mushrooms, tempeh, and fermented foods like kimchi, sauerkraut, and kombucha.
- Iron: Found in beans, lentils, tofu, baked potatoes, cashews, dark leafy vegetables, fortified cereals. Try to eat iron with vitamin C to help absorption.
- Omega-3 fatty acids: High amounts in flax seeds, chia seeds, hemp seeds, walnuts, soybeans, and plant oils. If you are pescatarian, fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, tuna, herring, and sardines are a great source as well.
- Zinc: Found in whole grains, wheat germ, tofu, sprouted breads, legumes, nuts and seeds.

If you have any questions or concerns about vegetarian or vegan diets, please call the Wellness Center's Dial-A-Nurse helpline at (773) 508-8883. To make an appointment with the Wellness Center dietitian you can also book online at <https://www.luc.edu/wellness/nutrition/appointmentservices/>.

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