

Why vegetarian?

If you care about the planet, love animals, want to be healthy and help stop world hunger, then a vegetarian diet is the only way to go. The food is great and the benefits to you, animals and the planet are huge. So go vegetarian!



What can you eat as a vegetarian?

Well, how's this for starters....

Vege burgers/sausages, rice, pasta, noodles with veges and tofu or miengin, spuds, chips, hummus, dips and crackers, pancakes, pita pockets or wraps with salads and falafel, popcorn, curries, nuts, vege pies and savouries, pizza, soups, salads, bean or tofu casserole, mezze, vege kebabs, sushi, nachos.....

Vegetarian food is yum! Sometimes new foods take some getting used to, but have a little of something new everyday for 13 days and your taste buds will start to love it. True! Give it a go!

Nutrition

Eat a rainbow: make sure your meal plate has all the colours, especially green. Rainbow eating ensures variety and taste.

The iron and vitamin C connection

The best way to absorb iron on a vegetarian diet is to eat fruit with every meal. The vitamin C in fruit helps non-haem iron absorption. Excellent vegetarian sources of iron include all wholegrain cereals and breads, all dried beans and peas, broccoli, dried fruit, iron fortified soya milks and marmite. Avoid cola with food as the caffeine stops the iron being absorbed.

Protein

Easy! Vegetarian sources of protein include foods such as baked beans, peanut butter, hummus, felaful, soya or dairy cheese, yogurt or milk, nuts, cereals/grains, beans, lentils, seeds (try sunflower or pumpkin) etc. Many foods contain protein. In fact, the only foods that are notably low in protein are sugar, fruit, fats and oils.

To provide the right balance of protein, combine foods to get the best mixture of amino acids. Try these delicious protein packed combos: beans on toast, pesto pasta, refried beans and nacho chips, satay peanut sauce and rice, nut or bean burgers, falafel in pita bread. Yum!

Calcium

Bone density is determined in adolescence. So ensure at least three sources of calcium in your diet everyday. Good sources include calcium enriched soya or rice milks/yogurt/ice cream, tofu, broccoli, baked beans, hummus, figs and refried beans.

Eat three meals a day

Teens bodies are growing at a rapid rate. It is important that as you grow that you both eat well and exercise regularly. Eat at least three proper meals a day to keep energy levels high and to provide the nutrients you need. Snack on fruit, hummus, crackers, wholemeal toast and marmite, nuts, popcorn, seeds etc rather than empty junk snacks and sugary drinks.

Going vegan?

Ensure a daily B12 intake by eating marmite and B12 enriched soya and rice milks (such as 'So Good Essential' and 'Rice Dream Enriched').

Help your vitamin D levels with 20 minutes sun exposure everyday (do it before 10.00am and after 4.00pm to avoid the risk of burning).

People who don't know much about vegetarian nutrition may tell you it's hard to get enough nutrients on a vegetarian diet. Well, it's hard to get enough nutrients on any diet (vegetarian or non vegetarian) if it is poorly planned. Ensure you keep to the rules above. Take responsibility for your health and show by example how well you can live on a vegetarian diet.

Being hassled about being a vegetarian?

Hang in there

Remember why you went vegetarian. You're not trying to be difficult but sometimes living by your principles means being different from the mainstream.

Dining out?

Almost all restaurants offer a vegetarian choice, or you can ask for a dish to be made without the fish or meat. A good restaurant will want to accommodate you.

Invited for dinner?

It can be frustrating to cook a meal for a guest and find out once it is made that they cannot eat it. Do give dinner hosts prior notice that you are vegetarian and you could also offer to bring a dish to be extra helpful.

Remember you're in good company

Social support is important. So you need to find others. Join or start a vegetarian youth group. Chat with other teen veges online (www.vegetarianteen.com). Join the New Zealand Vegetarian Society.

By the way, a UK study (of more than 8,000 people now aged 30 whose intelligence had been measured when they were 10 years old) showed that the higher your intelligence the more likely you are to be a vegetarian. See how clever you are?

Remember that some of the world's best thinkers, artists and sports people are vegetarian or vegan: Alyssa Milano, Anna Paquin, Orlando Bloom, Melanie Lynskey, Joaquin Phoenix, Jennie Garth, Lisa Simpson, Moby, Shania Twain, Belinda Carlisle, Stella McCartney, Carl Lewis, Leonardo da Vinci, Vincent van Gogh, Socrates, Plato, Albert Einstein, Sir Isaac Newton, St Francis of Assisi, Ghandi and.... you!

Go to www.famousveggie.com to find out more people who are veggie.

Understand why people want to hassle you

Non-vegetarians have blocked their natural compassion for other creatures. You might be the first person who has made them think about why they eat meat, and that can be uncomfortable.

Stay positive

There are many advantages in going vege including longer life expectancy, better health, fewer animal deaths, less wastage of water, land and the earth's precious resources, lower grocery bills, and membership of a community of vegetarians from all around the world. We are everywhere!

Further information

Leaflet sets available from the NZ Vegetarian Society

Vegetarian families set
Reasons for vegetarianism set
Vegetarian nutrition set

Each set contains 5 information leaflets

The New Zealand Vegetarian Society

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Websites

www.vegetarianteen.com
www.vegetarian.org.nz
www.vegetarainfamilies.org.nz
www.vegfamily.com
www.viva.org.uk
www.vrg.org

Well planned vegan and other types of vegetarian diets are appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including during pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, and adolescence. From: *Position of the American Dietetic Association and Dieticians of Canada: Vegetarian Diets*. 2003. Endorsed by the New Zealand Dietetic Association.

This information was compiled by Yolanda Soryl and was produced by the New Zealand Vegetarian Society.

VEGETARIAN TEENS



VEGETARIAN NUTRITION

“ The best thing about going vegetarian is the food, (I'm not joking!) It tastes better, you know it's healthy and you know it didn't spend its whole life shoved in a cage just to become a hamburger! ”
– Hema (13)

“ I became a vegetarian 'cause I have always loved animals. I came to the realisation that eating meat meant that theoretically I was the reason that an animal had to suffer and die. I strongly believe in taking a stand and making a statement for things you believe in. ”
– Genevieve (17)



New Zealand Vegetarian Society