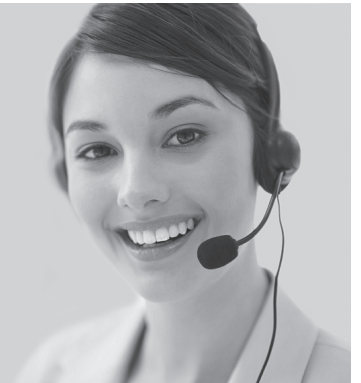


“It was great to talk with you.

Thank you for your interest in vegetarian eating and your health.  
I hope you find this tip sheet helpful.

Please give me a call if you have more questions about this or other topics.

As your health coach, I’m ready to help in any way I can.”



A vegetarian eating plan has many health benefits. Vegetarians tend to have lower rates of:

- Heart disease.
- High blood pressure.
- Type 2 diabetes.
- Some types of cancer.

But not all vegetarian eating plans are healthy. Use the guidelines below to help you develop a healthy meatless lifestyle.

Note: The guidelines on this sheet are for healthy adults. Pregnant and breastfeeding women have special dietary needs. So do children, older adults, teenagers, and those with chronic medical conditions. Are you in one of these groups? Talk with your doctor or a registered dietitian about what is right for you.

### **Get enough protein.**

Your body needs protein to stay healthy. What if you do not eat meat, poultry, or fish? Include these foods in your diet every day:

- Vegetables and whole grains
- 5 to 6-1/2 ounce equivalents of vegetarian protein foods (1 ounce equivalent is 1/4 cup cooked dried beans, split peas, or lentils; 1/2 ounce nuts or seeds; 1/4 cup tofu; or 1/2 of a soy or bean burger patty)
- 2 to 3 servings of dairy foods per day (1 serving is 1 cup of fat-free or 1-percent milk, yogurt, or fortified soy milk; or 1.5 ounces of hard, low-fat cheese; or 2 ounces of low-fat processed cheese)

Soy milk contains the same amount of protein as cow’s milk (8 grams per cup). Almond, coconut, and rice milk are much lower in protein (1 gram per cup).



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**Get enough calcium and vitamin D.**

Good sources of calcium include:

- Dairy foods (choose nonfat or 1-percent milk, yogurt, and low-fat cheese).
- Tofu or soy milk with added calcium.
- Dark green, leafy vegetables (such as collard greens, kale, mustard greens, turnip greens, spinach, and broccoli).

Your body needs vitamin D to use calcium. Drink milk or soy milk with added vitamin D, or take a daily vitamin that includes vitamin D.

**Get enough zinc.**

Seafood and meat are among the best sources of zinc in the American diet. As a vegetarian, it is important to get enough zinc from other foods. Plant sources include:

- Whole grains and wheat germ.
- Nuts and seeds.
- Cooked dried beans, split peas, and lentils.

**Get enough iron.**

Iron is found in both animal and plant foods. Good plant food sources include:

- Dark green, leafy vegetables (such as collard greens, kale, mustard greens, turnip greens, spinach, and broccoli).
- Dried beans and peas.
- Whole grains.
- Cereals and other grain products with added iron.
- Eggs.
- Dried fruit.
- Brewer's yeast.
- Blackstrap molasses.

To get the most from iron-rich plant foods:

- Eat them with foods rich in vitamin C. Examples are citrus fruits or juices, potatoes, strawberries, cantaloupe, green pepper, tomato, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts.
- Cook acidic foods (such as tomato sauce) in an iron skillet.

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**Get enough vitamin B12.**

Vitamin B12 is needed for health. It is only found in eggs, dairy products, and other animal foods. Vegetarians who eat only plant foods must:

- Take a vitamin B12 supplement.
- Eat foods that have added vitamin B12, such as fortified soy milk and cereals.

**Replace unhealthy fats with healthy ones, and keep amounts small.**

Whole or 2-percent cow's milk/yogurt/cheese and butter are high in saturated fat. Replacing foods that are high in saturated fat with healthier options can lower the level of bad cholesterol in your blood and reduce your risk of heart disease. Choose nonfat or low-fat milk/yogurt/cheese or soy-based products and replace butter with vegetable oil or tub or liquid margarine.

Vegetable oils, nuts, and seeds are high in unsaturated fats, which the body needs in small amounts for health. They are also high in calories. Limit oils to 5 to 6 teaspoons per day (including amounts used in cooking and food preparation) or a handful of nuts or seeds.

For more information about healthy vegetarian eating, go to **ChooseMyPlate.gov**. This web site provides facts about the nutrients vegetarians should focus on. It also provides tips for planning healthy eating in general. Visit [www.choosemyplate.gov/tips-vegetarians](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/tips-vegetarians).



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**Take Action**

Check when completed	
<p><b>My SMART* goal for this week</b>                      Do your best to reach the SMART goal you set with your health coach. Write it below. Check the box when you have completed it.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Staying on the path to wellness</b>                      As you adopt or continue vegetarian eating, choose one or two of the areas below that you would like to improve. Write a weekly SMART goal for each one in the blanks. Check the boxes when you have completed them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To get more protein, I will _____ <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>• To get more calcium and vitamin D, I will _____ <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>• To get more iron, I will _____ <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>• To get enough vitamin B12, I will _____ <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>• To replace unhealthy fats with small amounts of healthy fats, I will _____ <input type="checkbox"/></li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

\*SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Appropriate, Realistic, and Timely. For example, "To get more protein, I will buy two brands of soy milk on Saturday. I will drink a glass of it on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday next week with dinner."

SMART goals help you succeed! If you have any trouble setting your weekly SMART goals, ask your health coach for help.

The information in this tip sheet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Before making changes, always talk to your doctor about what is right for you.

**Sources:** Adapted from information provided by the University of Pittsburgh Obesity and Nutrition Research Center (grant DK046204 from the National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases).

USDA Food Patterns: Healthy Vegetarian Eating Pattern. 2010-2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Available at <https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/appendix-5/>. Accessed January 21, 2018.



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