

Going Vegan: Healthy Eating

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Welcome

to a **tastier** healthier,
planet-friendly
world...

So you want to know more about going vegan and healthy eating? Well that's brilliant news!

With the popularity of vegan food rising and so many people getting on board it's good to know how to do it properly.

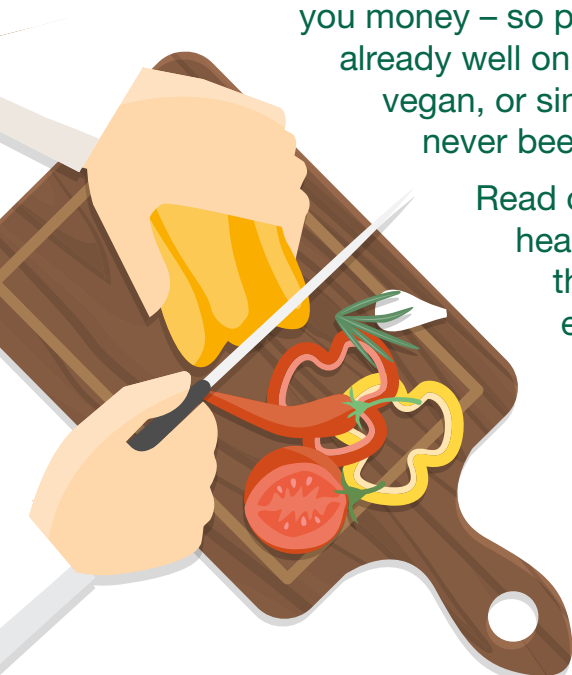
If you're looking to eat to beat climate change, going vegan is a great way to help the planet.

Going vegan or eating more vegan meals means getting to grips with plant-based nutrition. What about 'We'll help you make sure you get your nutrition right by considering the nutrients you need, such as B12, calcium, Omega-3 and vitamin D. And, of course, we focus on plant-sources of iron and protein too.

We will introduce you to some great vegan foods that you may not have cooked with or used before like tofu and plant milks. These can make meeting your nutritional needs delicious and easy. Soon you'll be at home with how vegan nutrition works and be making really tasty balanced meals that you can feel good about!

Vegan food is inventive, mouth-watering, convenient and affordable. Becoming vegan can be a cost effective way to stay healthy and you may find switching to vegan versions of your favourite meals saves you money – so prepare to feel great about yourself! It means you're already well on your way to a happier and healthier you. Going vegan, or simply switching to eating more vegan meals, has never been so easy.

Read on to find out more about how easy eating a healthy balanced vegan diet can be. Once you've got the basics, and know what foods to include, you'll enjoy getting all the nutrition you need!







Cook what you love!

Love what you cook!

So many of your favourite dishes can easily become vegan-friendly with a little imagination and some simple switches. By just adapting the meals you already love, you'll end up with nutritious, new (and often improved) versions of your favourite foods. As you already know how to cook these meals, vegan versions are straightforward to prepare, and they're just as tasty. They can even be quicker to cook too!

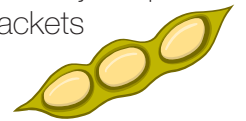


The Protein Switch

When you go vegan – or simply start eating more vegan meals - the key is making sure you swap your current sources of protein (such as meat or fish or eggs and dairy) for other ingredients which provide not only protein, but also important nutrients such as iron. Remember that meat substitute products are not exactly the same as meat nutritionally, but they are nonetheless a good source of some key nutrients such as protein and iron. Combine beans, nuts, tofu, or meat substitutes like soya mince, to your everyday meals for a well-balanced meal. After all, nutritionists say plant protein sources are leaner and a positive choice for you and the planet.

Beautiful Beans

From baked beans to chick peas, butter beans and kidney beans, these highly-nutritious and satisfying foods are a great way to add protein to any recipe. Buy them ready-cooked in tins for convenience or dried in packets to save money (just remember to soak them properly before cooking).



Tofu and Tempeh

Tofu is made from soya beans and, when chopped into bite-sized pieces, tofu makes a great addition to a wide range of dishes such as stir-fries and curries. Tempeh is made from fermented soya beans and has a firmer texture. It makes a great alternative to tofu in dishes and is delicious marinated and served in a salad.



Go Nuts

Nuts are a great way to add protein to a meal. Try adding cashews to a curry, or throw some flaked almonds into a salad for extra bite. Peanut butter stirred into low-fat coconut milk also makes an indulgent and nutritious sauce for a stir-fry.



Mock Meat

A quick and convenient way to adapt your favourite meals is to use a meat-alternative like Quorn or soya mince, and it can be really practical if you're the only vegan in a household of meat-eaters. Some meat eaters say they can't even tell the difference!

Calm those cravings!

If you ever get cravings for meat or cheese it's likely that what you're actually missing is a protein-rich food with that hint of salt and fat. You can recreate the "meat" hit with a juicy vegan Quorn burger, dusted with smoked paprika to give it that fresh-from-the-barbecue taste. Or delve into a hot bean chilli made more indulgent with toppings of cool avocado and spicy tomato salsa. If it's that tangy cheese hit you're after, try products such as nutritional yeast flakes or yeast extract or just plump for one of the whole range of vegan cheeses available.

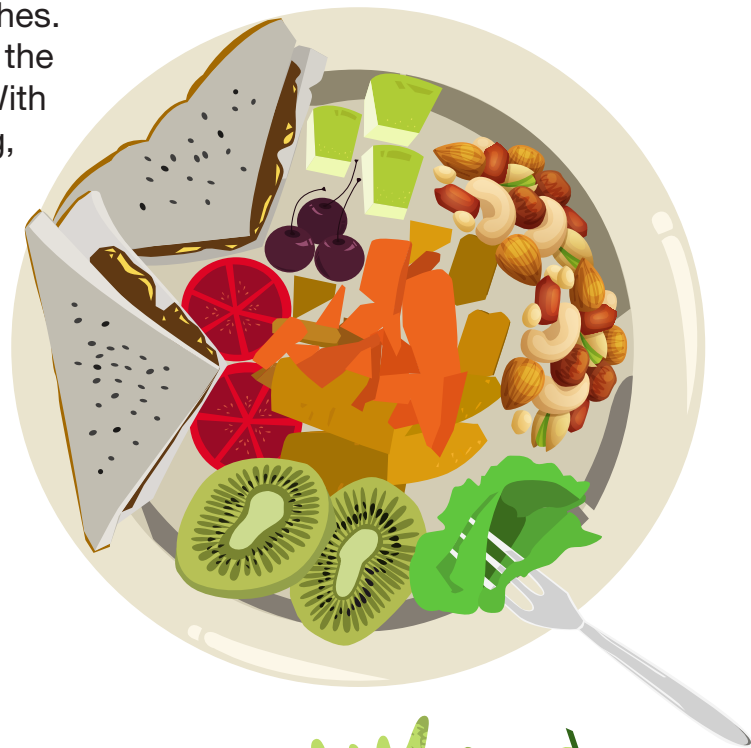


Lift your Lunch

Anyone can get stuck in a lunchtime rut with a lunchbox filled with the same old familiar, limp sandwiches. Fortunately, it's easy to dodge this pitfall with the wealth of colourful vegan options available. With a little imagination, your lunch can be exciting, inspiring and packed with protein!

Salad days

Get creative and turn a simple salad into a nourishing meal! The key to a good salad is not just to balance it nutritionally, but also combine a variety of bright colours. Add marinated tofu, tasty lentils, toasted seeds or falafel to crunchy leaves, sweet peppers, onions and herbs. Add carrots, beetroot or sweet potato for extra depth of flavour and colour. Herbs such as parsley can also be added for an extra boost of iron.



Cheesed off with sandwich fillings?

You could use vegan cheese, but there are plenty of alternative ideas that are a better source of protein. Try houmous, carrot and coriander or smashed avocado with a bit of green salad, tomato and grilled tofu. Don't forget the vegan mayonnaise! You could even try falafel in wholemeal pitta with a spicy salsa for a more interesting lunch break



Baked potatoes

Simple and nourishing a baked potato is a good source of vitamin C or you could try a sweet potato for extra yum-factor! There are lots of ways to turn a humble spud into an indulgent lunchtime feast. Try baked beans with a little vegan cheese, three-bean chilli with guacamole or stir-fried vegetables with crispy tofu.







But what should I eat?



For those curious about how vegan nutrition works, a little bit of learning can go a long way. With this in mind, here's a bit of practical theory for you.

To give you a head start with nutrition, in the next couple of sections we've provided some meal inspiration based on the foods people tell us they love: pasta dishes, filled baked potatoes, chillies and curries. These meal ideas show you how a fairly basic day's intake as a vegan can meet all your nutritional needs. As it's a common (if unfounded) concern with somebody new to a vegan diet, these mealtime ideas focus in particular on where you get your iron and protein from.



Nourish

Confused by carbs? Ignorant about iron? Knowledge is power, so they say – and knowing a little bit about vegan nutrition can do you the power of good. It's about getting the most out of your vegan diet. If your meals are well thought out, they can be nutritious and healthy. A nutritionally balanced plate of delicious food means you can get all the iron and protein your body needs.

Just follow these simple tips every day:

- Stock up on protein with 2-3 portions a day of beans, pulses, tofu or meat substitutes
- Choose a starchy carbohydrate like potatoes, bread, rice or pasta as the base for each meal
- Bag your 5-a-day by eating at least five portions of fruit and vegetables
- Aim for 2-3 portions of dairy alternatives a day
- Hydrate! Aim to drink 6-8 glasses of fluid
- Think healthy: choose reduced-fat, no-added-sugar and low salt products

Protein and Protein Combining

We've said it before, but it's vital to think about sources of protein! For vegans it's also getting balanced protein that's important. The proteins in grains are subtly different from the proteins in pulses (peas, beans and lentils.) As a vegan you should eat both to balance your protein intake. For example, try tofu with ramen noodles, soya mince with pasta and falafel with flatbread. Vegan Quorn products with almost any carb make a great combination.



Iron

The main sources of iron for vegans are in cereals, bread, pulses, nuts, seeds and green veg (like rocket, kale, spring greens and peas). Consider combining iron rich foods with high vitamin C ingredients like peppers, tomatoes, and broccoli which helps to increase absorption. You can also drink a glass of orange juice with your meal.



Starchy carbs

Around a third of the food you eat should be lovely, starchy carbs. Always opt for wholegrain wherever possible – it'll contain more fibre and nutrients than white or refined starchy products, and will help you feel fuller for longer. Choose wholegrain bread, pitta and chapattis; wholewheat pasta and brown rice; and wholegrain breakfast cereals and oats.

If you are in a hurry, there are always quick cook grains like couscous and bulgur wheat.



Five-a-day

Aim to eat a broad variety of fruit and veg in different colours for maximum nutritional impact – think of it as eating a rainbow! A small 150ml glass of fruit juice or smoothie counts towards your five-a-day. Beans and lentils count too. In fact, one-third of what you eat every day should be fruit and veg. Fresh, frozen and canned all count!



Calcium

Keep your bones strong by eating a variety of foods that contain calcium such as broccoli, oranges, nuts and seeds and fortified dairy alternatives.



Vitamin B12

Dairy alternatives and yeast extracts fortified with vitamin B12 are available but because vitamin B12 is really important vegans should take a regular supplement.

Fat, Sugar and Salt

While fat, sugar and salt can make food taste great, it's best not to consume too much. As a vegan you can replace butter for a lower fat non-dairy spread. Choose low-salt options when buying seasoning like stock cubes or powdered stock. Boiling or grilling food is healthier than, and just as tasty as, frying with oil. An occasional treat of vegan ice-cream, cakes and sweets is something we all love, but it's worth remembering they can contain lots of sugar and fat.



Hydrate

It's thirsty work staying healthy, so keep topped up with water, sugar-free soya milk and other sugar-free drinks throughout the day. Tea and coffee count too! Fruit juice and smoothies also count, but because they contain high amounts of fruit sugars you should limit your intake to around 150ml a day – that's just one small glass.

Meal inspiration

It's official – vegan food can be deliciously tasty and good for you, as long as you plan what's on your plate. We're here to help with a selection of mouth-watering ideas based on exactly the kind of dishes you love – think of comforting pasta, baked potatoes piled high with fabulous fillings, satisfyingly spicy chilli and gorgeous aromatic curries. When you eat a variety of nutritionally balanced meals throughout the week (such as those in this booklet), it's easy to get all the nourishment you need. The meal ideas on the next couple of pages are packed with fibre, whole foods and colourful fruit and veg, and will make healthy eating as easy as pie! So, get inspired by our simple guide and vary those dishes to keep it interesting. It'll all taste amazing!

What Should I Eat?

Breakfast

Kick-start your day the healthy way with a nourishing bowl of muesli, porridge or bran flakes for a wholegrain hit, and add ground flaxseed for omega-3. A sprinkling of berries or a small glass of juice will add essential vitamin C, which helps your body absorb iron. If you are using plant-based milks or yogurts for breakfast, remember to use calcium and vitamin B12 fortified varieties. Add nuts for extra iron. Or if you fancy cooking, try some scrambled set tofu for a protein and calcium hit.



Lunch

Move things on with a bit of variety! If you had cereal or porridge for breakfast, it's time for a more substantial lunch. Choose falafel or vegan Quorn sandwich slices in a veg-packed salad made with rocket or watercress. As an alternative to white bread, consider wholemeal, rye or seeded loaves. If you had a large breakfast follow it with something lighter, maybe a grain-based dish like couscous, quinoa or brown rice salad, a wrap or soup packed with vegetables and beans. Remember, a portion of beans or lentils count towards your five-a-day! Round things off nicely with some nuts and fruit or fortified soya yogurt.



Dinner

You should aim for an equal balance of protein and carbs. Whether you're having lentils, tofu or soya mince, pair it with something grain-based like rice, noodles or wholewheat pasta. Remember grains, pulses and nuts are great for iron too. Add cashew nuts to a curry or throw some beans into a stew. Squeeze in colourful extra veg by having some in your main meal and dark leafy greens on the side. Try steamed broccoli for extra calcium. For vitamin B12, extra protein and richness use plain unsweetened soya yogurt as a topping or accompaniment. Yeast flakes with vitamin B12 make a lovely savoury addition to sauces.



Snacks

Keep your blood sugar levels stable and add a nutritional boost with a mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack. Dip some carrot sticks in a pot of creamy houmous for protein (more veg towards your five-a-day). Drink fortified plant-based milk or smoothies for a convenient, quick and nutritious snack full of protein and calcium. But keep it varied – try cereal bars and trail mix (if you didn't have grains or nuts for lunch), fresh or dried fruit, or peanut butter on crackers. Bananas will give you a quick potassium boost. If you feel like cooking, try roasting some pumpkin and sesame seeds in the oven with a splash of low-sodium soy sauce to make a crunchy snack.



Desserts

If you love pudding, then good news! It can actually be nutritious, as long as you watch out for sugar and fat. Try a sundae made from berries and silken tofu topped with toasted oats and you'll be bagging some protein! Try fresh or frozen soya yogurt as a healthier alternative to ice cream and top with crunchy granola and fresh fruit. And don't forget humble rice pudding – you can make this using fortified plant-based milks and is fabulous with sliced banana or a handful of blueberries.

Nutrition FAQs

Should I swot up on soya?

No need – scientists have found soya foods to be nutritious, safe and healthy. Products made from soya beans such as tofu, soya milk and soya yoghurts are a great protein source and can be a good alternative to dairy.

And the amount you eat doesn't matter – for people consuming typical or above average amounts, studies show no adverse effect on fertility or hormonal balance. For women in particular, there may even be positive advantages! For optimum benefits if you're using soya dairy-alternatives, choose products fortified with calcium and vitamin B12.



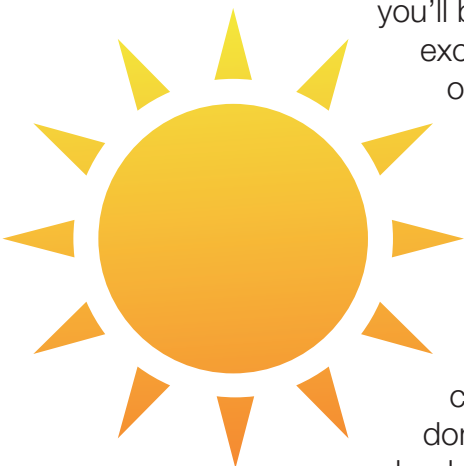
What's the key to Omega-3?

Omega-3, one of the so-called 'good fats', is vital as part of a healthy diet and is crucial to keep our eyes and brains in tip-top condition. Vegan sources include flaxseed oil and ground flaxseeds, rapeseed oil, chia seeds, pumpkin seeds and walnuts. A supplement containing types of omega-3 called DHA and EPA can be convenient.

Vegan vitamin pills - are they vital?

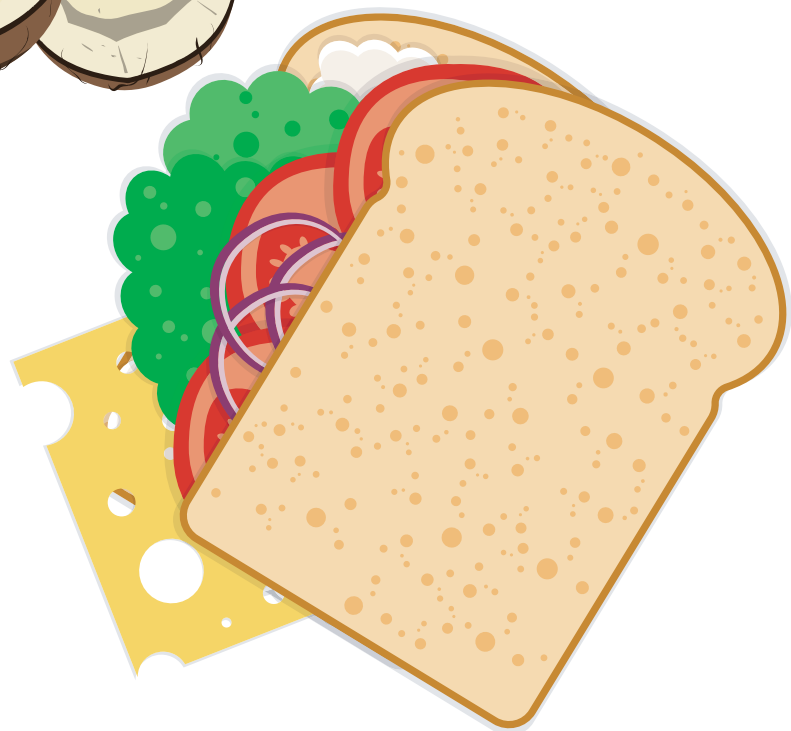
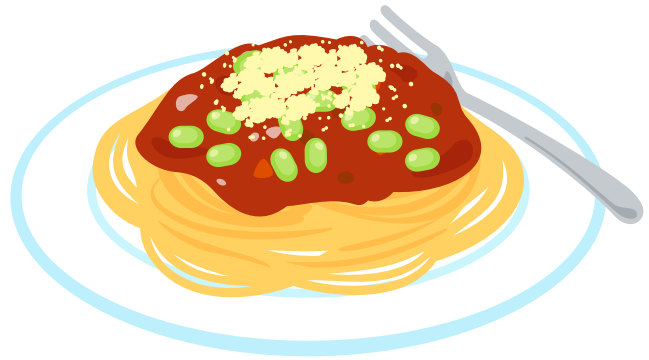
As long as you're eating a variety of balanced vegan meals you'll be getting the nutrients your body needs. One exception is vitamin B12. Even if you're eating plenty of vitamin B12 fortified foods the advice is to take a supplement. This is easy: 10 micrograms a day or 2000 micrograms just once a week.

Another thing to consider is vitamin D – the 'sunshine vitamin'. For anyone living in the UK - whether vegan or not – it's now recommended to consider taking a daily 10 microgram vitamin D supplement during autumn and winter, simply because the sun doesn't shine enough! And those who don't get outside much, or routinely cover their skin, should take a vitamin D supplement throughout the year.



Don't be too cheesy

You don't have to miss out on tangy cheese in your vegan meals. There are plenty of vegan cheeses available to buy from cheddar to mozzarella. Vegan cheese is mainly made from coconuts. Just like dairy cheese vegan versions are high in fat and salt but as part of a balanced vegan diet it should be okay to use vegan cheese sparingly for flavour. As an alternative to cheese in cooking, try experimenting with nutritional yeast flakes and a Japanese product called miso to give a similar flavour. You can also make an easy cheese sprinkle by mixing ground almonds with nutritional yeast flakes and a pinch of stock powder.



Being Vegan - the Big Questions

Where can I find vegan recipes?

There is a huge wealth of tasty ideas and recipes online – all you need to do is Google “healthy vegan recipes” and you’ll be spoiled for choice. Better still visit the Vegetarian Society [vegan recipe collection](#) for more delicious recipe ideas.

What if I want advice on vegan nutrition?

Come to us! Just visit our website for more information and the Vegetarian Society is happy to help with any queries you might have. Just get in touch! You can email us at hello@vegsoc.org



¹ PHE <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/phe-publishes-new-advice-on-vitamin-d>

² : SACN Vitamin D and Health Report <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sacn-vitamin-d-and-health-report>

About - the Vegetarian Society

Here at the Vegetarian Society we are passionate about vegan food! We want everyone to know how varied and delicious meat-free meals are – and how easy it is to enjoy and maintain a vegan lifestyle.

We want you to love being meat- and dairy-free, and love what's on your plate as much as we do. So how can we help? Simply put, we support and represent vegetarians and vegans, and offer help, up-to-date advice and inspirational recipes which are as fresh as a box of newly-picked veg!

Got any questions?

Get in touch – we're here to help if you are looking for advice for yourself, your friends or family. Drop us an email at: hello@vegsoc.org, or turn to the back cover for other ways to contact us.

Our Vegetarian Society Approved trademarks, which you can find on products and restaurant menus, make finding vegetarian and vegan meals and ingredients easier.

We're also keen to encourage everyone to get some –flour on their aprons by coming along to our Vegetarian Society Cookery School. Our vegetarian and vegan courses offer a fun, hands-on and informative experience in a friendly atmosphere. Get messy, get creative, and eat well for life!

With us here to help you, there's nothing else you need to worry about.

All that's left is for you to enjoy living life as a vegan. Welcome to a delicious new world!

www.vegsoc.org





Vegetarian
SOCIETY

The Vegetarian Society of the United Kingdom Ltd
Parkdale, Dunham Road, Altrincham, WA14 4QG

0161 925 2000 ☎

www.vegsoc.org 🌐

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