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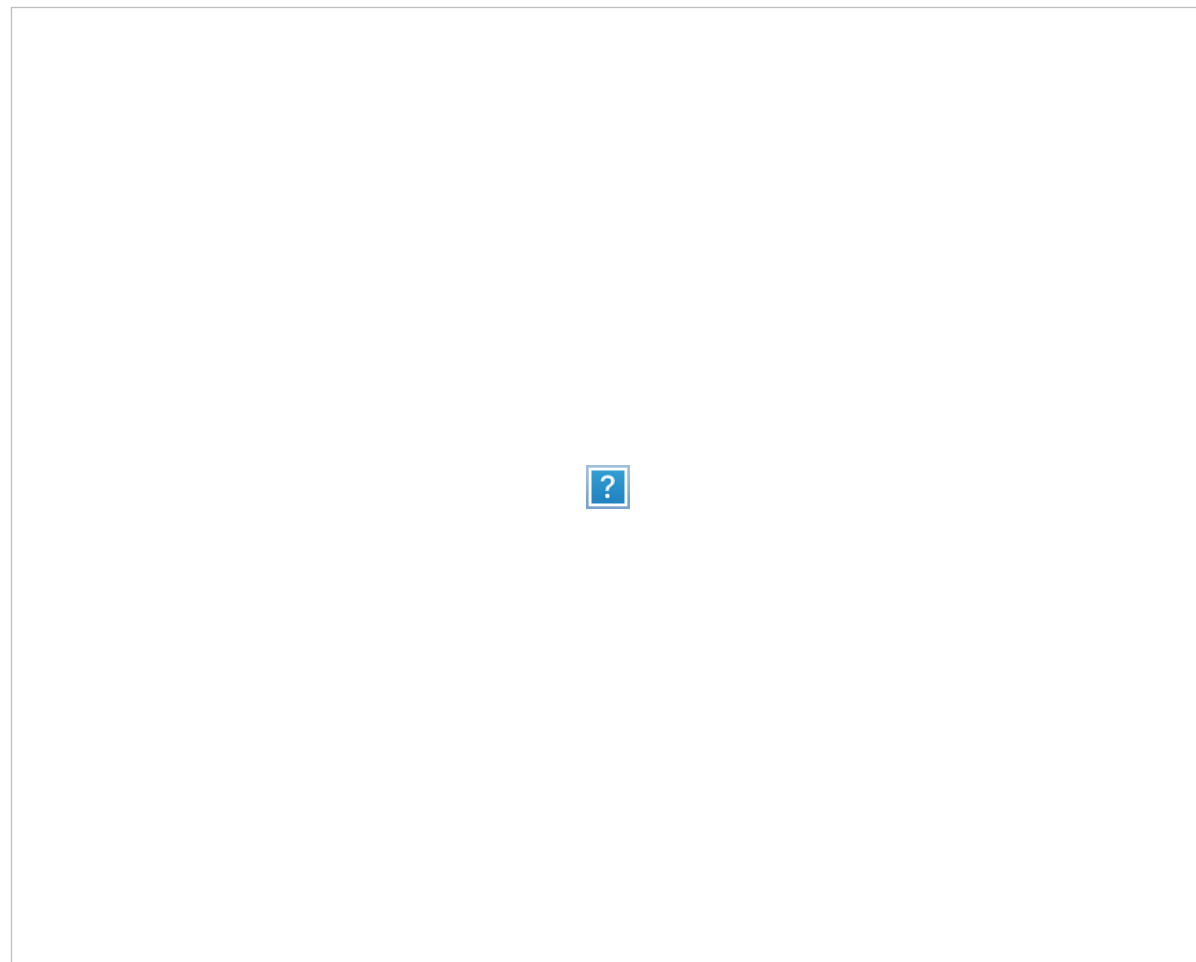


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Outstanding Vegetarian Nutrition

The worldwide vegetarian population is growing, yet some newbies are still learning the tricks of achieving all the health benefits of this plant-based lifestyle. Additionally, some people are apprehensive to venture into vegetarian meal planning simply because they fear that this type of diet will deprive them vital nutrients and vitamins. The truth is, with a proper balanced diet based on plant foods, you will not only thrive, you may be healthier than ever before! To help you ensure you're getting all of the necessary vitamins, minerals, and nutrients during your journey into vegetarianism (or veganism), we've put together this quick guide. Happy eating!



Quick Guide: American Vegetarianism and the Benefits of a Plant-Based Diet

- **US Adult vegetarian population:** Approximately 3% of American adults identify themselves as vegetarians. An additional 10% claim they generally follow a vegetarian diet, though they occasionally eat meat and fish.^[i]
- **The young vegetarian population is growing:** There was a 1% increase of people aged 8 to 18 adopting a vegetarian diet between 2004 to 2005.^[ii] Young vegetarians often have the hardest time ensuring a proper vegetarian nutrition due to lack of experience and nutritional knowledge.
- **Super health benefits of vegetarianism:** Vegetarians have lower incidences of heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and hypertension, as well as cancers (40% lower in fact) such as colorectal, ovarian and breast cancer.^[iii] Osteoporosis, Alzheimer's disease, and multiple allergies are also lower in plant-based dieters.^[iv]

Take Action! Proper Vegetarian Nutrition for the Uninitiated Veg-Head

1. **Nutrient #1: Protein:** Even without eating meat, vegetarians can still get sufficient amounts of protein. Protein is essential for muscle building, repair of damaged tissues and muscle fiber and it also helps in fatigue recovery. A good variety of plant proteins will provide you with the amino acid profile you require for healthy living.
 - **Vegetarian sources of protein:** Peas, seeds, tempeh, low-fat dairy products, nuts, beans, tofu, lentils, and other whole grain products. Check out this [ABC News' list of healthy plant-based protein sources](#) for additional ideas of proteins eaten by vegetarians.^[v]
2. **Nutrient #2: Calcium:** Calcium is important for proper growth, bone development and prevention of diseases like osteoporosis.
 - **Vegetarian sources of calcium:** High-calcium dark, leafy, green plant foods like mustards, collards, turnip greens, kale, and spinach.^[vi] Whole grains are also excellent calcium sources because they provide Vitamin B which aids in calcium absorption. Other tasty options include nuts, seeds, legumes, tofu, soybeans, almonds, and hazelnut. Low-fat and fat-free dairy products like yogurt, cheese, and milk as well. Check out this [MSN Healthy Living Non-Dairy Calcium Foods list](#) for more vegan sources of calcium.
3. **Nutrient #3: Vitamin B12 and B Complex:** Vitamin B12 is needed by the body to ensure that the enzyme systems within the body are functioning smoothly and that the immune system is in good condition. Vitamin B complex ensures nervous system health, aids in red blood cell production, and strengthens your DNA blueprint.
 - **Vegetarian sources of B Vitamins:** Fortified soy milk, nutritional yeast fortified with vegan Vitamin B12, and B12 fortified vegan foods like veggie burgers, breakfast cereals, vegetarian sausages, and more. Consult [Vegan Health](#) for more advice on good plant-based sources of B12.
4. **Nutrient #4: Iron:** Iron is the primary trace element that is needed for transporting oxygen, oxidation, and prevention of health problems like anemia.
 - **Vegetarian sources of iron:** Pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, soybean nuts, blackstrap molasses, dried fruits, dark-green vegetables like spinach and broccoli and prune juice.^[vii] Other plant-based sources of iron include tofu, potatoes, turnip greens, raisins, watermelon, tomato juice, and bok choy. Discover other iron-rich plant-based foods through [Vegetarian.org](#).
5. **Nutrient #5: Vitamin D:** This vitamin is important for the absorption of calcium by the body. There are several ways to maintain proper dietary levels Vitamin D.
 - **Vegetarian Vitamin D: Sunlight:** Get the right amount of exposure to sunlight ([this US News Health Guide will give you the basics](#)) which allows your body to create its own Vitamin D quickly and effortlessly.
 - **Vegetarian Vitamin D foods:** When you can't get enough sun (especially those living in Northern regions), include ample amounts of products that are fortified with Vitamin D in your diet, including soy milk and vegan vitamins.^[viii]

6. **Get support from vegetarianism organizations:** There are plenty of organizations and institutions these days which support vegetarianism, not just in the US but also in other parts of the world, including [GreenPeople.org](#), [VegetarianCharity.org \(UK\)](#), and [VNV \(Australia\)](#). Aside from getting great advice from these organizations, you can proactively support them. Also be sure to let non-vegetarian grocers and restaurants know that you want to see more vegetarian offerings – they care about what you think!

Dig Deeper: How to Achieve Proper Vegetarian Nutrition

- Start your journey of becoming a vegetarian and eating the right foods by consulting PETA's [Vegan's Guide to Good Nutrition](#) and [Brown University's Health Education](#).
- Be inspired to become a vegetarian by discovering [who the vegetarian Hollywood celebrities are](#).
- There are many good books which provide excellent guidance for how to adopt a healthy vegetarian diet, including: [The New Becoming Vegetarian: The Essential Guide to a Healthy Vegetarian Diet](#) and [Vegetarian Nutrition](#).
- Check out hundreds of healthy, delicious vegetarian recipes through [Vegetarian Times](#).
- Check out the [different types of vegan diets](#) and find the one that will best suit your diet preferences and lifestyle.

Images by [SweetOnVeg](#)

[i] *More Young People Go the Vegetarian Route*. (n.d.). Retrieved from: http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2007-10-14-veggie-kids_N.htm

[ii] (More Young People Go the Vegetarian Route)

[iii] *Being a Vegetarian*. (n.d.). Retrieved from: http://brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/Health_Education/nutrition_&_eating_concerns/being_a_vegetarian.php

[iv] *Animals Used for Food: Cancer*. (n.d.). Retrieved from PETA: <http://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/cancer.aspx>

[v] (Being a Vegetarian)

[vi] (Being a Vegetarian)

[vii] (Being a Vegetarian)

[viii] (Being a Vegetarian)

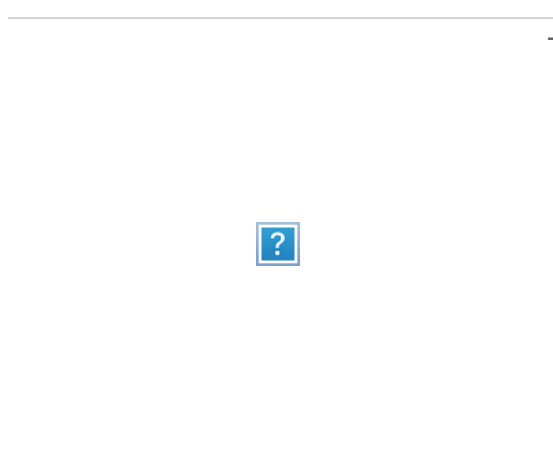
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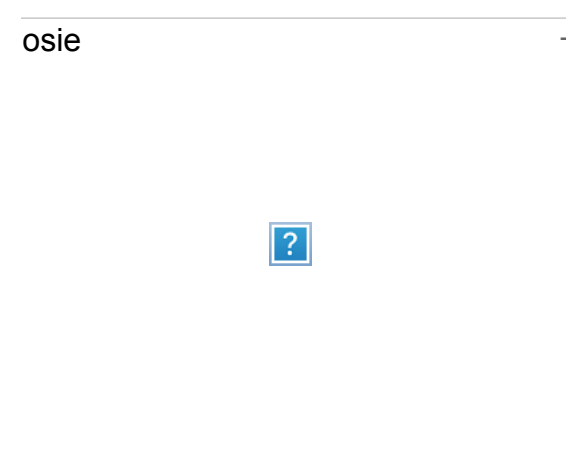
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