

ONLINE RESOURCES

eatright.org	nutrition.gov
choosemyplate.gov	vegetariannutrition.net
health.gov/dietaryguidelines	nal.usda.gov/fnic
vrg.org	usda.gov



Well-planned vegetarian diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and may provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases.

NUTRIENTS OF CONCERN FOR VEGETARIANS

Protein

It is very important to make sure your body is getting enough protein from a variety of sources. One main source of protein is animal products, so cutting some of these out of your diet makes it even more important to focus on getting enough protein.

Vegetarian sources of protein include dairy products, eggs, soy products, whole grains, beans, nuts, nut butters, and seeds.

Calcium

Calcium and vitamin D work together to build strong bones. Vegetarians should consume calcium from a variety of sources. Dairy products are rich in calcium, but calcium can be obtained from plant sources if milk is not consumed.

Vegetarian sources of calcium include tofu, soybeans, leafy green vegetables, broccoli, fortified non-dairy milk, almonds, fortified breakfast cereals, and fortified orange juice.

Iron

Iron is very important in our bodies because its main job is to carry oxygen throughout the body. Iron deficiency can cause iron-deficiency anemia, which can cause symptoms of weakness, fatigue, irritability, or lack of concentration. Vegetarians should consume a variety of iron sources to meet daily requirements. Consuming vitamin C at each meal will increase iron absorption.

Vegetarian sources of iron include iron-fortified breakfast cereals, soybeans, dark leafy greens, beans, enriched breads, rice, pasta, eggs, peanut butter, peas, dried apricots, prunes, and raisins.

Zinc

Zinc contributes to growth, development, and proper immune function. Vegetarian sources of zinc include soy products, beans, cheese, whole grains, nuts, legumes, zinc-fortified breakfast cereals, wheat germ, and seeds. Milk and shellfish are also good sources of zinc.

Vitamin D

There are not many natural food sources of vitamin D, but common sources include vitamin D-fortified soymilk, cow's milk, orange juice, and cereals. Sunlight also provides vitamin D. Those who do not consume dairy products or do not receive much regular exposure to sunlight may want to consider taking a vitamin D supplement of no more than 100% of the daily value.

Vitamin B12

B12 is in all foods of animal origin, including eggs and dairy products. Adequate B12 intake is typically not a concern for vegetarians who consume some dairy products of eggs. Strict vegetarians or vegans, however, may need to supplement their diet by choosing a fortified breakfast cereal or by taking a vitamin B12 (cobalamin) supplement of no more than 100% of the daily value.

Vegetarian sources of B12 include vitamin B12-fortified foods (such as nutritional yeast, soymilk, meat substitutes, and cereals), dairy products, and eggs.

TIPS

Build meals around sources of protein, such as beans, lentils, tofu, eggs, and dairy.

In addition to a well-balanced diet with adequate calcium and vitamin D, weight-bearing exercise such as yoga, running, walking, and strength training will also help build strong bones.

Just because a food is vegetarian doesn't mean it is healthy. In addition to having variety and balance in what you eat, look for low levels of sodium, fat, cholesterol, and added sugars in the foods you eat.

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