

going veggie...

for health and wellbeing



Why going vegetarian is a positive choice for your health and wellbeing



Even the government has reduced its recommended red meat intake, so more and more people are curious about the difference a meat-free diet might make to their vitality and wellbeing.

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Going vegetarian reduces your carbon footprint and saves animals, but it can also be better for your own health and wellbeing.

Many health conscious people go veggie to improve their diet. Others find that cutting out meat helps with specific health problems.

Whatever your reasons, switching to a vegetarian diet can give your health a boost. A vegetarian diet can be a refreshing change, a tasty option and can bring some medically proven benefits too.

This leaflet explains why.

Are vegetarians healthy?

Statistics show that vegetarians are less likely than meat eaters to suffer from diabetes, heart disease and some other medical conditions. Vegetarians are also less likely to be obese and tend to have a lower average body mass index (BMI).

Blood pressure is a good indication of overall health. Average blood pressure is lower in vegetarians and the incidence of high blood pressure or hypertension among veggies is also lower than average. Hypertension is a condition that responds well to dietary change, with higher fibre and plant protein intake potentially helping, and studies indicate that switching to a vegetarian diet can bring blood pressure down.



5
or more
portions
a day

Fruit and vegetables
Fresh, frozen, juiced, canned or dried fruit and vegetables, for vitamins, minerals & fibre.

2-3
portions
a day

Alternatives to meat and fish, including eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein
Include a variety of pulses, nuts, seeds, eggs, soya, Quorn™ & other proteins like wheat in the diet to ensure adequate intakes of protein, minerals and vitamins.

A balanced vegetarian diet is one of the easiest ways to follow official healthy eating guidelines, with five portions of fruit and veg a day, plenty of complex carbohydrates and antioxidants as well as lower saturated fat and cholesterol. A balanced vegetarian diet tends to be lower in calories and higher in fibre so can also help maintain a healthy weight.



5
portions
a day

Bread, rice potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods

Make these starchy foods the basis of most meals. Try to include wholemeal or wholegrain versions when possible and avoid adding too much fat. These supply carbohydrates, fibre, protein and some vitamins and minerals.



2-3
portions
a day

Milk, dairy and alternatives

Good sources of calcium, protein and some vitamins. If you don't eat dairy foods, choose fortified soya, rice or oat drinks or make sure you eat other foods high in calcium.



0-3
portions
a day

Foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar

Although you need some fat, eat these foods sparingly and look out for low fat alternatives.

lower fat and higher fibre



extra lean
minced beef
has over four
times the fat
of pulses

Cutting out meat can markedly reduce your intake of fat, especially saturates. Even extra lean minced beef has over four times the fat of pulses. Making your Bolognese or curry with Quorn™ or soya mince will reduce the fat by three quarters.



a balanced
vegetarian diet
has up to twice
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as the national
average

Soluble fibre can help keep cholesterol under control and a balanced vegetarian diet has up to twice as much fibre as the national average. Soya foods and nuts have been shown to be especially helpful in keeping cholesterol down so if yours is high then a balanced vegetarian diet may help. The same foods, rich in plant proteins and slowly absorbed carbohydrates with a low glycaemic index (GI), can be beneficial in avoiding and managing diabetes.



healthy balance

Obviously one can eat unhealthily as a vegetarian but if you swap meat for more pulses, nuts, fruit, vegetables and wholegrains you will be changing your eating habits for the better.

Focusing on fresh, unrefined and unprocessed foods will help balance your intake of essential nutrients such as B vitamins and iron. Fruit and vegetables provide beta-carotenes and antioxidants, vitamins C and E as well as so-called 'phyto-chemicals' like lycopene in tomatoes and flavonoids that have anti-inflammatory properties and can help with arthritic conditions.

Antioxidants are a varied group of chemically active compounds that help protect the body from the damaging effects of free radicals.

Many people worry about how to replace the nutrients most associated with meat but a vegetarian diet can easily provide enough protein and iron for any stage of life. As a veggie you will eat a wider range of more varied proteins and as too much animal protein puts a lot of pressure on our kidneys, doctors often recommend a vegetarian diet to help avoid and treat kidney stones.

People choose to go vegetarian for many different reasons and lots of other life choices contribute to good health, but a well planned vegetarian diet really can make you feel better inside and out.

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more information

For more information on vegetarian nutrition, visit www.vegsoc.org/health

Get all the support you need to change your diet for the better at www.vegsoc.org/goingveggie or by ordering a copy of 'Going Veggie', the Vegetarian Society's guide to going, and staying, vegetarian.

For more information on every aspect of vegetarianism, including delicious meat-free recipes and details on the benefits of joining the Vegetarian Society, visit www.vegsoc.org

www.vegsoc.org

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References for the information in this booklet are available at www.vegsoc.org/references

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