

# VEGGIE GUIDE for teens



**VEGGIE  
NUTRITION  
MINI-POSTER  
INSIDE!**



# >>> GOOD FOR YOU FOR GOING VEGGIE! A VEGETARIAN IS...

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**Note to teens:** We use the word "parent" in this booklet to describe anyone who is responsible for looking after you.



"Once I realised meat was from a dead animal, I thought it was cruel so I wanted to stop."  
Lois, age 14

**Someone who eats all sorts of yummy, delicious food including curries, pizza, pasta, stir fry, Sunday roasts and fry-up breakfasts, chips, ice cream, crisps, cakes, fruits, vegetables, beans, butties...** pretty much anything EXCEPT animals. A vegetarian does not eat any meat, poultry, game, fish, shellfish, or by-products of animal slaughter such as gelatine or rennet.

If you are reading this it is likely that you have recently become a vegetarian, or are thinking about taking the first steps to cutting meat and fish out of your diet. In doing so, you will join millions of other vegetarians in the UK and around the world.

**Here are some of the great reasons why you should feel good about going veggie:**

### It's BETTER for you.

A vegetarian diet is known to have a wide range of health benefits, including lower rates of obesity, coronary heart disease and high blood pressure. Vegetarians also do not live with the guilt that an animal had to die for their dinner (or breakfast or lunch) – and that is something to celebrate!

### It's BETTER for the animals.

Every day, in the United Kingdom alone, over two million land animals are slaughtered for their meat. It has been suggested that a lifelong vegetarian will save the lives of approximately 760 chickens, 5 cows, 20 pigs, 29 sheep, 46 turkeys and half a tonne of fish.

### It's BETTER for the planet.

It is estimated that livestock farming produces more greenhouse gases than the world's entire transport system – and, yes, that does include aeroplanes, cars and trains! Clearing land for livestock production is responsible for 70% of the destruction of the Amazon rainforest in South America.

### It's BETTER for your family.

Having a new vegetarian in the house is an opportunity for the rest of the family to consider the way they eat and why. Many of us eat the way we do out of habit, not necessarily because it's healthy. Thanks to your veggie diet, your whole family will be introduced to a new way of eating and thinking about food.

# WHY DO YOU WANT TO GO VEGGIE?

## >>> VEGGIE CONSIDERATIONS

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HIDDEN INGREDIENTS, VISIT [www.vegsoc.org/veggieaware](http://www.vegsoc.org/veggieaware)

Patrick, age 17 >>

"I realised that there were alternatives to meat, and I didn't need to cause animal deaths to satisfy my dietary needs."

Fiona, age 14

People go veggie for all sorts of reasons. The main ones are:

- > They care about animals.
- > They want to be healthier.
- > They're worried about the environment.
- > Their religion discourages eating animal flesh.
- > They don't like the taste or texture of meat.

Whatever your reasons for going veggie, you should feel proud of your decision. Vegetarianism is a compassionate, healthy way of life.

### Different types of vegetarians

There are several different types of vegetarian. All vegetarian diets include plant foods such as fruit, vegetables, beans and grains, but there are some variations when it comes to eggs and dairy products.

#### Lacto-ovo vegetarians

are the most common type of vegetarian. Their diet includes eggs and dairy products (milk, cheese, yoghurt, etc).

#### Lacto vegetarians

eat dairy products but no eggs.

#### Ovo vegetarians

eat eggs but no dairy products.

#### Vegan diets

are totally plant-based and do not include eggs, dairy products or anything that comes from an animal, including honey.

### Be veggie aware

A surprising number of foods that would otherwise be vegetarian contain "hidden" ingredients that are made from slaughtered animals. The main culprits are:

**Gelatine (or gelatin):** usually made by boiling the ligaments, tendons, skin and bones of pigs and cattle in water. Gelatine is sometimes found in yoghurts, ice cream and confectionery (including lots of jelly sweets and even mints).

**Rennet:** an enzyme taken from the stomach of a slaughtered calf; used to curdle milk to make cheese. Vegetarian cheese is made from non-animal-based rennet and will be labelled as "suitable for vegetarians".

**Cochineal (E120, carmine):** a red dye made from the dried, crushed bodies of the cochineal insect. Used to colour food, drinks and cosmetics; it is sometimes referred to as "natural colouring" since it isn't made artificially in a laboratory.

**Animal fat:** fat made from the tissue and bones of slaughtered animals. It is used in the manufacture of some margarines, cakes, pastries and biscuits. Suet and lard are types of animal fat, though you can buy vegetarian suet. Butter is made from milk so is suitable for vegetarians.

### Vegetarians do not eat fish!!!!

Every step toward vegetarianism is a positive one, but if you still eat fish, please do not call yourself a vegetarian – yet. It causes confusion.

**Eggs:** Many vegetarians choose to eat only **free-range eggs** from hens with adequate indoor and outdoor space, and the freedom to move between the two. By contrast, caged hens may never experience natural light or fresh air, and do not leave their cages until they are taken for slaughter.

The average caged hen spends her life in an enclosure with just enough room to stand upright, and a floor space **no bigger than this open booklet.**



# TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR VEGETARIANISM

## TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

**By choosing to go veggie, you have made an independent, positive decision for yourself. Well done! Now you need to follow that decision through with independent, positive action.**

**Learn all you can about veggie nutrition.** It's not enough to just cut meat and fish from your diet. You must replace the nutrients you once gained from those foods with new, vegetarian options. It's not hard to do, but you need to know what your options are. By reading this booklet from cover to cover (including the Parents section), visiting the Vegetarian Society's websites ([www.youngveggie.org](http://www.youngveggie.org) and [www.vegsoc.org](http://www.vegsoc.org)), and getting yourself a good veggie cookbook (see below), you will be well on your way.

**Get a good vegetarian cookbook.** Go to the library or your nearest book shop and take a look through their vegetarian cookbooks. As a new veggie, you will want one that includes a thorough introduction to vegetarian cooking and nutrition. Look for simple recipes that you think you and your whole family will enjoy. Remember that the range of vegetarian cookbooks is vast. Some will be written for beginners, others will be targeted at experienced gourmet chefs. Choose a book and style that suits your cooking skills and taste. You can also email [education@vegsoc.org](mailto:education@vegsoc.org) for suggestions.

**Help with meal planning.** Talk to the person in your home who does most of the cooking and food shopping. Armed with your new vegetarian cookbook and nutritional knowledge, discuss the veggie meals you would like to try. Show them some recipes and explain why you think they are good options – not just for you but for the whole family.

**Offer to do some of the cooking.** If your parents are worried about your new vegetarian diet, one of their concerns might be that they will now have to cook two meals rather than one. Ease these concerns by offering to do some of the cooking. Remember: non-veggies can eat and enjoy a vegetarian meal, but a vegetarian cannot eat and enjoy a non-veggie meal.

**Help with the washing up.** Whether your vegetarianism is generating more washing up or not, show your parents that you are serious about your new diet – and appreciate their support – by helping with the washing up. They may start to wish you had gone veggie years ago!

**The more you can demonstrate to your parents that you are serious about your new diet and are committed to making it work, the more likely they will be to support you in your decision.**

"...there was some initial worry that we'd have to cook multiple meals, but there are ways round it. My family enjoy veggie dishes together a couple of times a week (they've no choice when I cook!). My dad makes a big stir fry mix and then divides it into two pans, with tofu for me and prawns for everyone else. And today we all had pasta but with different sausages."

Rebecca, age 16

Lois, age 14 >>>



Now that you've gone veggie, you may be asking yourself:

**WHY ARE PEOPLE CHALLENGING ME ON MY VEGETARIANISM RATHER THAN SUPPORTING IT?**

Raven, age 14 >>

## >>> VEGGIE CHALLENGES

**People may behave in all sorts of strange and mysterious ways when you tell them that you have become a vegetarian.**

It is often difficult to understand why they are getting so defensive and worked up about a positive choice that you have made for yourself, and which has little or no effect on them. It may help to keep some of the following points in mind:

**Your parents** may be feeling a sense of rejection. By choosing to become a vegetarian you have rejected the meat-based diet upon which you have been brought up. While your choice is an entirely personal one, your parents may still see it as a criticism of them and your upbringing. Reassure them that this is not the case, and remind them of your reasons for going veggie.

**Other family members and friends** may think that by going veggie you are in some way saying that you are better than them, or that their dietary choices are not good enough for you anymore.

**"Being a vegetarian is a GOOD thing. It sounds simple but the amount of people who try to make you feel stupid and like you're just being awkward can make things hard. Knowing you're doing a good thing helps."**

James, age 17

People can become oddly defensive about vegetarianism, often for two main reasons:

- > **They are afraid of things that are different and, to them, vegetarianism is "different".**
- > **They are uncomfortable with the reality of where meat comes from, but they choose not to think about it. By becoming a vegetarian, you have forced them to think about it.**

If a person is feeling threatened by your vegetarianism, they may try to make you feel uncomfortable, too, by asking difficult questions. Don't be intimidated or put off by their questions. Your ability to answer them calmly and rationally will only serve to strengthen your position. And if you don't know the answers to their questions, it's okay to say, "I don't know. I'll find out and get back to you."

**READ ON TO FIND OUT MORE >>**

# VEGGIE CHALLENGES

TO SEE MORE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS VISIT BEING VEGGIE AT [www.youngveggie.org](http://www.youngveggie.org)

Here are some of the questions most commonly encountered by new vegetarians:



**> If you don't eat meat, where will you get your protein from?**

Protein is available in all foods apart from refined white sugar and some oils. A vegetarian's protein needs are automatically met by a balanced, varied diet. Meat does provide protein, however it is only one source. Nuts, beans, eggs, soya, lentils, Quorn™ and other meat alternatives are all excellent sources of protein.

**> What about iron? Where will you get your iron from if you don't eat meat?**

A lack of iron is one of the most common problems in a typical British diet. It is just as much a nutritional problem for meat-eaters as it is for veggies, and research shows that veggies are no more prone to iron deficiency than meat-eaters. Iron can be found in leafy green vegetables, chick peas, baked beans, tofu, fortified breakfast cereals like Fruit & Fibre and Weetabix, muesli, wholemeal bread, dried fruit, nuts and pumpkin seeds, as well as loads of other places. (See page 8 in the Parents section, and the Veggie Nutrition mini-poster in the centre of this booklet, for more information on getting enough iron in your diet.)



**> If you're a vegetarian, why are you wearing leather shoes?**

First of all, it may be the case that your shoes are not made of leather: they just look like they are. There are lots of vegetarian shoes on the market these days. Secondly, many vegetarians have leather products from their pre-veggie days and have made the choice to continue wearing them rather than have them go to waste. There are also some people who are not comfortable eating meat, yet continue wearing leather. It is a question of where you, as an individual, choose to draw a line. Of course, if you are not comfortable with an animal dying for your dinner, you probably aren't comfortable with them dying for your clothes and footwear either.



**> I bet you would eat meat if you were starving on a desert island, wouldn't you?**

Wow! If they resort to this one, they really are desperate for an argument... In the unlikely event that you ever found yourself stranded on a desert island (or even travelling through a less-than-vegetarian-friendly country), some vegetarians would eat meat in this life-and-death situation and others would not. As with anything, it is up to the individual to make his or her own choice. On a desert island you might also have to run around without many clothes, sleep in a cave, never have a proper wash, brush your teeth with a stick, and wipe your bottom with leaves, but that doesn't mean you would do those things after you had been rescued!

**Avoid the temptation to say things like "Do you realise you're eating a dead animal?" to non-vegetarians. It may be true, but that's not how to win them over to a veggie diet. By quietly and proudly getting on with your own vegetarianism, you will be setting an example for others to follow.**

# TIPS FOR VEGGIE SUCCESS

- > Take your time if you want to. You don't have to go completely veggie all at once. Gradually replacing meat and fish with other foods over a period of weeks or months is fine.
- > Look for foods labelled as "suitable for vegetarians", and keep a special eye out for products with the Vegetarian Society Approved symbol. You will be surprised at how many there are!
- > Don't get stressed-out. If you've decided to go veggie and then accidentally eat something non-veggie, that doesn't make you a bad person or mean that you are no longer a vegetarian.
- > You will learn about vegetarianism as you go and, as long as you remember why you went veggie in the first place, you will succeed in adopting a completely veggie, healthy way of life.
- > Join the Vegetarian Society for additional support and a sense of community. Visit [www.vegsoc.org/join](http://www.vegsoc.org/join) or email [membership@vegsoc.org](mailto:membership@vegsoc.org) to find out more.
- > Read the Parents section of this booklet. We've given them lots of really good information, too!
- > Answer the questions on the next page and talk to your parents about them.
- > Pull out the Veggie Nutrition mini-poster from the centre of this booklet, hang it up, and refer to it often.
- > Email [education@vegsoc.org](mailto:education@vegsoc.org) for further help and advice, and to order more resources.



## TALK TO YOUR PARENTS

Talking to your parents about your new vegetarian diet is really important. Take a few minutes to consider the following questions and write down your answers. Your parents have some questions of their own to answer, too! When you've both answered your questions, pull out the mini-poster on the back of this page and discuss what you've written. A good chat will be really helpful to you both.

**Why is being a vegetarian important to you?**

**What are the steps you are willing to take to make your new diet work for everyone in your house?**

**How would you like your parents to support you as a vegetarian?**

*Don't forget the Vegetarian Society is always available to offer information and support. Email [education@vegsoc.org](mailto:education@vegsoc.org) for further help and advice.*

"...in the end it's completely worth it. It makes a difference both to the world and your body - both for good."

*Raven, age 14*

# GOOD LUCK!

# VEGGIE NUTRITION

## good foods at a glance

The plate below shows what we should eat for a balanced and healthy diet. A portion is an average serving, for example, a slice of bread or two tablespoons of baked beans.

### FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

*5 or more portions daily*

Fresh is best, although this group also includes tinned, frozen, dried fruits, salad, and juice. Fruit and vegetables contain fibre, vitamins and minerals. Potatoes don't count in this section, as they are predominantly a starchy food.

### BREAD, CEREALS AND POTATOES

*5 portions daily*

These starchy foods make up the basis for most meals. This group supplies carbohydrates, fibre, protein, and some vitamins and minerals. Remember that whole, unrefined cereals are best.



### PROTEIN-RICH FOODS

*2-3 portions daily*

This would be traditionally looked upon as the meat section. Vegetarians get a plentiful supply of protein from pulses, nuts, eggs, seeds, soya, tofu, Quorn™ and wheat protein. Many other foods also contain a small amount of protein too.

### MILK, DAIRY AND ALTERNATIVES

*2-3 portions daily*

This group provides a good source of calcium, protein and vitamins.

### SUGAR AND FAT

*0-3 portions daily*

Although some fat is needed in the diet, too much can lead to health problems. Fat and sugar occur naturally in foods, so we don't really need to add any extra to our diet.

### VITAMINS

**A** Carrots, spinach, peppers, dried apricots

**B** Wholemeal bread, yeast extract, leafy green vegetables

**B12\*** Eggs, milk and fortified products such as soya milk, breakfast cereals and yeast extract

**C** Citrus fruits, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, peppers

**D** Fortified products such as breakfast cereals and margarine, eggs, sunlight on the skin

**E** Vegetable oils, nuts, seeds, avocado

**K** Spinach, cabbage, cauliflower

### MINERALS

#### Iron

Beans, lentils, soya products, wholemeal bread, dried fruit, pumpkin seeds, molasses, fortified breakfast cereals

#### Calcium

Dairy products, tofu, leafy green vegetables, sesame seeds, almonds, fortified soya milk

#### Zinc

Sesame and pumpkin seeds, green vegetables, cheese, lentils, wholegrain cereals

#### Magnesium

Leafy green vegetables

#### OTHER ESSENTIALS

##### Protein

Peas, beans, lentils, cheese, nuts, seeds, eggs, rice, wholewheat pasta

#### Carbohydrates

Bread, rice, oats, beans, peas, lentils, potatoes, pasta, breakfast cereals, fruits

#### Essential fatty acids

Vegetable oils, seeds, walnuts

#### Fibre

Fruit and vegetables, oats, beans, pulses

\* B12 is not naturally found in entirely plant-based diets. Vegans must eat fortified products or take a vitamin supplement.



# VEGGIE GUIDE for parents

INCLUDES  
QUICK MEAL  
IDEAS!



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## About the Vegetarian Society

Established in 1847, the Vegetarian Society is an educational charity working to support, represent and increase the number of vegetarians in the UK. We offer specialist information, free of charge, through our extensive range of publications, recipe booklets and websites. Our aim is to make a difference to the future of vegetarianism – for individuals, animals and the environment.

If you find this guide useful, please donate to the Vegetarian Society or consider becoming a member. By doing so you will help us support more vegetarians and their families, provide free information to schools and caterers, and give all vegetarians a louder, stronger voice.

Please visit [www.vegsoc.org/join](http://www.vegsoc.org/join) or call 0161 925 2000 to learn more. Thank you.

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References for the information in this booklet are available at [www.vegsoc.org/references](http://www.vegsoc.org/references).

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**Note:** The word “parent” has been used throughout this booklet to refer to any individual caring for a young person.

# Welcome to the Veggie Guide for Parents



If you are reading this booklet, chances are your daughter or son has recently made the decision to become a vegetarian or is thinking about it. If you are not a vegetarian yourself, this may be causing you some anxiety and concern. What will you cook? Is vegetarianism healthy? Is vegetarian food expensive? Is your child just trying to annoy you? The Vegetarian Society has fielded all of these questions – and many more – from concerned parents over the years.

Rest assured that your child has made a healthy, thoughtful choice. A balanced vegetarian diet can benefit a person’s health, the environment and, of course, the animals that are not being eaten. And it’s full of lovely, delicious food, too! Your son or daughter’s choice to go veggie most likely reflects his or her feelings of compassion and a general awareness of the world. Feel proud of your child for making such a positive choice, and feel proud of yourself for raising a kind, compassionate human being.

This will be a time of learning and discovery for both you and your child. We have devised this two-in-one booklet with both of you in mind. Once you have read the

Parents section of the guide, we recommend taking a look at the Teens section, too. It may help you to better understand some of the questions and concerns your child might have.

The centre of this booklet features a pull-out Veggie Nutrition mini-poster. On the back of the poster you will find questions for both you and your child. Please do take the time to answer and discuss these questions, then pull out the poster and hang it in a place where you can both refer to it often. You will be well on your way to a happy, veggie-friendly household.

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. We hope it will answer all of your questions and put your mind at ease. If, however, you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Vegetarian Society’s Youth Education department either by phone or email (see page 2).

**We wish you and your child  
all the very best.**



# But what am I going to cook?!

This is a question on many parents' minds when a young person announces his or her intention to become a vegetarian. "But what do vegetarians eat?" they wonder, as visions of preparing two separate meals flash before the eyes of an already busy parent. You needn't worry, though – vegetarian food really isn't as strange or unusual as many non-vegetarians often imagine it to be. Plus, lots of the "new" vegetarian foods you will be introduced to as part of your child's change in diet are delicious, highly nutritious, and can be enjoyed by the entire family.

Your child's decision to go veggie is a great opportunity to take a look at the way your whole family eats. It is important for any diet – vegetarian or not – to be healthy and balanced. If your family's diet is healthy and balanced, then it is sure to already include lots of vegetarian food – you just may not have thought of those foods in that way before.

**Remember:** a food is vegetarian simply by not including any meat, fish or by-products of animal slaughter.

Some foods that are staples in a healthy, balanced vegetarian diet may hardly ever – or never – feature in the average non-veggie's repertoire. But that doesn't mean they shouldn't! Foods like soya, lentils, nuts and seeds, and meat alternatives such as Quorn™, are full of nutritional goodness. Anyone can benefit from eating these foods on a regular basis. If they are not already part of your family's regular diet, now is the perfect time to introduce them.

By exploring with your child how she or he will maintain a healthy, balanced vegetarian diet, you may just find that your entire family develops a healthier, more balanced diet, too.

## Vegetarian staples

- Meat alternatives (veggie burgers, veggie sausages, nut cutlets, etc)
- Soya mince
- Tinned kidney beans, chick peas, and other beans and pulses
- Dried lentils (red split, green, brown, puy...)
- Nuts (walnuts, almonds, peanuts, cashews, Brazil nuts, hazelnuts...)
- Seeds (pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds...)
- Dried fruits (dates, apricots, raisins...)
- Tofu
- Hummus
- Peanut butter

## Foods that are usually vegetarian

- All fruits and vegetables
- Baked beans
- Bread
- Pasta
- Pizza
- Rice
- Any type of potato (baked, boiled, mashed, roasted, fried...)
- Eggs
- Cheese
- Milk
- Breakfast cereals
- Yorkshire puddings
- Ice cream
- Biscuits
- Cake
- Scones



**"I think I eat healthier now. I don't eat lots of meat or poultry. I actually prefer vegetarian meals."**  
Barbara, Susan's mum

### Did you know...

...that Quorn™ sausages contain 12.6g of protein per 100g, while the average pork sausage has just 11.8g per 100g?

...that 50g of dried soya mince has **over three times** the amount of iron as 100g of beef mince, and slightly more protein, too?

# Vegetarian myths

## BUSTED!

“She had educated herself on the vegetarian diet, and what she needed to eat to get her protein and all other essentials. I was impressed, and assured that she was approaching vegetarianism in a serious manner.”  
Maxine, Fay’s mum

**MYTH: Vegetarians do not get enough protein.**

### FACTS:

**Most foods contain at least some protein, and it would be very difficult to maintain a balanced vegetarian diet that was short on this important nutrient. Indeed, one of the benefits of a vegetarian diet is that it contains adequate, but not excessive, protein.**

It may be reassuring to keep in mind that protein-rich foods should make up *just under 20%* of any healthy, balanced diet. The remaining 80% of a person’s diet should be comprised of foods that are already naturally vegetarian, many of which contain significant levels of protein in their own right. (See the Veggie Nutrition mini-poster at the centre of this booklet.) By going veggie your son or daughter is choosing to give up some sources of the “protein-rich foods” group, but certainly not all of them. In fact, the protein content of eggs and many plant-based foods such as nuts,

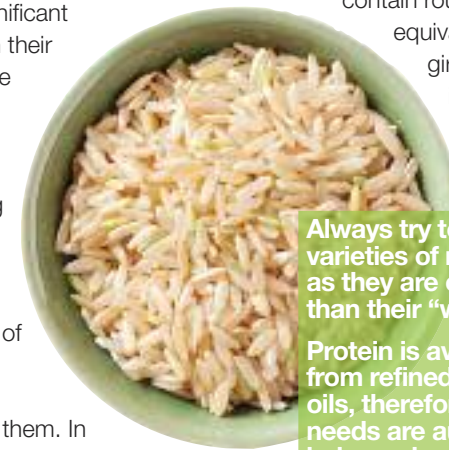
peas and beans is very high – often as high as meat and fish.

Good vegetarian sources of protein include baked beans, kidney beans, chick peas, lentils, Quorn™ products, soya-based meat alternatives (sausages, burgers, etc), soya milk, tofu, walnuts, peanuts, peanut butter, almonds, eggs, milk, cheese and yoghurt.

Some everyday foods that are normally regarded as carbohydrates (rice, pasta, breakfast cereals, breads, etc) also contain significant amounts of protein. For example, two slices of wholemeal bread contain roughly 9.4g of protein, the equivalent of 20% of a teenage girl’s recommended daily intake of protein.

**Always try to choose wholegrain varieties of rice, pasta, breads, etc, as they are often higher in protein than their “white” counterparts.**

**Protein is available in all foods apart from refined white sugar and some oils, therefore a vegetarian’s protein needs are automatically met by a balanced, varied diet.**





## MYTH: Vegetarians do not get enough iron.

### FACTS:

**Results from several studies suggest that the dietary iron intake of vegetarians is similar to that of non-vegetarians. However, low iron intake is one of the most common problems in a typical British diet. Meat-eaters and vegetarians alike need to pay extra attention to their iron consumption.**

Iron is present in a wide variety of plant-based foods, and even the non-vegetarian population relies far more on these foods for their main iron intake than they do on meat. In fact, red meat makes a surprisingly small contribution to iron intake amongst non-vegetarians – just 12% for men and 9% for women.

Eating or drinking something high in vitamin C (such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts or a glass of orange juice) with a meal containing iron-rich foods can triple the amount of iron absorbed by the body.

Visit [www.vegsoc.org/health](http://www.vegsoc.org/health) for more information on vegetarian nutrition.

### Iron-rich foods

It is recommended that girls and women between the ages of 11 and 49 should consume 14.8mg of dietary iron every day. Boys and men require between 8.7 and 11.3mg. The following foods are good vegetarian sources of iron:

**Weetabix™**  
37.5g (2 biscuits)  
= 4.5mg  
**Cheerios®**  
25g = 2.98mg  
**Bran flakes**  
25g = 2.9mg  
**Blackstrap molasses**  
21g (1tbsp)  
= 2.87mg

**Pumpkin seeds**  
25g = 2.5mg  
**Dried soya mince**  
25g = 2.25mg  
**Fruit & Fibre**  
25g = 2.2mg  
**Dried apricots**  
50g (6 apricots)  
= 2.05mg



*"Hector (right) appears to have considerably more stamina and physical and mental strength than other swimmers of his age. I happen to believe that being a vegetarian certainly has no negative effects on Hector and may actually have positive ones."* **Jon, Hector's dad**

## MYTH: Vegetarians are pale, skinny and unhealthy.

### FACTS:

**Just like the rest of the population, vegetarians come in all shapes, sizes and varying degrees of health. Like anyone else, a vegetarian's physical appearance and general levels of health and fitness are caused by genetics, diet, environment and exercise. Indeed, a vegetarian diet is known to have a wide range of health benefits, including lower rates of obesity, coronary heart disease and high blood pressure.**

### Vegetarianism and eating disorders

Vegetarianism is not an eating disorder. Unfortunately, a very small percentage of young people struggling with eating disorders do use "vegetarianism" as an excuse for placing further restrictions on their diet. If you suspect that your child has an eating disorder, please contact **beat**, the UK's leading charity in providing help, information and support to people affected by eating disorders. [www.b-eat.co.uk](http://www.b-eat.co.uk)

## MYTH: Vegetarian food is expensive.

### FACTS:

**A home-cooked vegetarian meal will usually work out to be around the same cost, or even a bit cheaper, than its non-vegetarian alternative. As is the case with non-vegetarian food, the cost of producing a vegetarian meal depends on the foods you choose to prepare, and the quality of the ingredients purchased.**

Ready meals tend to cost more than a home-cooked meal, although vegetarian ready meals cost roughly the same as non-vegetarian ready meals. An informal survey

in a national supermarket discovered that the average price difference between vegetarian ready meals and their non-vegetarian equivalents worked out to be around 10p.

And if your family has the occasional meal out, you'll be glad to have a vegetarian amongst you. Vegetarian main courses in restaurants are almost always cheaper – often by at least a couple of pounds – than even the cheapest non-vegetarian main.



# Accommodating the whole family

## IN ONE MEAL

“Soon after Gillian went veggie at the age of 13, we both did along with our older son. This was for animal welfare reasons. Twenty-four years later, we are now all vegans in that we don’t eat eggs or dairy and use soya milk instead.”  
Claude and Denise,  
Gilly’s parents

Your entire family may not wish to go veggie because there is now one vegetarian amongst you – although it has been known to happen! So what do you do if you need to feed your vegetarian child and the rest of the family?

Here are some tips:

- **Remember that non-vegetarians can eat and enjoy vegetarian food, but the reverse is not true.**
- **When planning meals, it may help to think of the non-meat parts first, as they can serve everyone. Think of any meat, fish, or meat alternative as add-ons.**
- **It is often very easy to replace meat entirely with a meat alternative, or to prepare a meat alternative in a separate pan.**
- **Most supermarkets now sell veggie bacon and sausages – perfect for meat-free fry-ups.**
- **Don’t forget about all of those already-vegetarian foods that your family has been enjoying for years (see page 5).**

### Sunday roast with a veggie

It’s easy to make small changes to the Sunday roast – or Christmas dinner – to accommodate a vegetarian.

- Roast the potatoes in a separate tin from the meat, using vegetable oil or margarine. They will be just as crisp, and lower in saturated fat, too!
- A shop-bought or homemade nut roast is a filling replacement to the meat portion, and doubles-up as a tasty alternative to stuffing for everybody.
- Yorkshire puddings cook well in vegetable fat, or you can buy ones that are suitable for vegetarians in the freezer section of your local supermarket.
- If you are using meat juices in the main gravy, make some gravy in a separate jug using gravy granules and hot water. Most gravy granules are suitable for vegetarians, so check your usual brand.
- And don’t forget the dessert! Happily, most puddings are already veggie-friendly, so no one has to miss out. If you are buying a pudding, just make sure it’s suitable for vegetarians first.



Visit [www.youngveggie.org/recipes](http://www.youngveggie.org/recipes) for more delicious recipe suggestions!

### Quick meal ideas:

**Bangers 'n' mash:** fry up veggie sausages in one pan, non-veggie sausages in another; boil some potatoes then mash them with butter and milk; boil some peas and mix up some veggie gravy. Dinner's ready!

**Stir fry:** prepare lots of fresh vegetables along with any veggie and non-veggie protein-rich foods. (Quorn™ chunks or tofu work really well in a stir fry!) Heat some oil in two separate pans and cook up all of the ingredients along with some seasoning like Chinese 5 Spice. Serve with boiled rice or noodles, and soya sauce on the side.

**Pizza:** buy a couple of pizza bases, and top with tomato paste and grated vegetarian cheese. Veggie and non-veggie pizzas can be easily created, depending on the additional toppings selected. Serve with salad.

**Burgers and chips:** buy some veggie burgers from the frozen section of your local supermarket. Prepare according to packet instructions on a separate tray from any non-veggie burgers. Place burgers on a bap with salad, and top with ketchup, mayonnaise or barbecue sauce. Serve with chips.

Isabel, age 14 >>

"I cooked a lot of casseroles, and Italian dishes with cheese as the star, Mexican dishes, and others. These are dishes where soya-based meat substitutes work very well, and I took advantage of this."  
Maxine, Fay's mum

## Talk to your child

Take a few minutes to consider the following questions and write down your answers. We have asked your son or daughter to answer some questions, too. When you've both answered your questions, pull out the mini-poster on the other side of this page and discuss your responses. A good conversation about vegetarianism should be very helpful to you both.

Do you have any concerns about a vegetarian diet? If so, what are they?

How can your son/daughter help to make his/her vegetarianism easier for you?

What else would you like to know about vegetarianism, and what else would you like your son/daughter to learn?

Don't forget to contact the Vegetarian Society at [education@vegsoc.org](mailto:education@vegsoc.org) for additional help or support.