

## So, you're thinking about becoming a vegetarian...

These days, many teens are becoming vegetarians for different reasons: concern for the environment, animal rights, religious reasons and also because vegetarian diets can be healthy. Whatever your reason, here is some information that you'll need to know.

### Are you ready to become a vegetarian?

Take this quiz below to see if you have what it takes to become a vegetarian.

1. I love trying foods from different countries like burritos or falafels.	Agree	Disagree
2. I eat a lot of leafy, green vegetables.	Agree	Disagree
3. I will try any food once.	Agree	Disagree
4. I eat foods like refried beans, nuts, sunflower seeds, kidney beans, peanut butter and chick peas.	Agree	Disagree
5. I will order a vegetarian pizza, while my friends are all eating chicken wings and burgers.	Agree	Disagree

**Score:** Give yourself 1 point for every time you agreed with a statement.

- ↻ 4 to 5 points: **NO PROBLEM...** You can start eating the vegetarian way tomorrow!
- ↻ 2 to 3 points: **LOOSEN UP...** Be more adventurous in what you eat.
- ↻ 1 point or less: **NO WAY!** Vegetarianism is not for you. Think about it again in a year or two.

### What kind of vegetarian do you want to be?

Many people may call themselves vegetarians even though they eat fish or eggs or cheese. There are actually many different types of vegetarians. If you are thinking about becoming a vegetarian, be sure to eat lots of whole grain products, vegetables and fruit. If you're not eating much meat, then you should eat a variety of meat alternatives such as tofu, soy products, nuts, seeds and legumes (beans, peas and lentils). See the chart on the next page to figure out what kind of vegetarian you want to be.



## What kind of vegetarian do you want to be?

If you don't eat...	But you do eat...	Then you are a...
red meat	some kind of meat, poultry or fish, milk products, eggs or meat alternatives	semi-vegetarian
any type of meat, poultry or fish	milk products, eggs and meat alternatives	lacto-ovo vegetarian
any type of meat, poultry, fish or eggs	milk products and meat alternatives	lacto-vegetarian
any type of meat, poultry, fish or milk products	eggs and meat alternatives	ovo-vegetarian
any type of meat, poultry, fish, milk products or eggs	meat alternatives: legumes (beans, peas, lentils) tofu, soy products, peanut butter, nuts and seeds	strict vegetarian or vegan

### Are you getting enough protein?

You can get enough protein if you plan your meals carefully. Protein helps our bodies grow and repairs injuries. Proteins are made up of building blocks called amino acids. There are nine "essential amino acids" which we can only get from food because our bodies can't make them.

Proteins from meat, poultry, fish, milk, cheese, yogurt and eggs are "complete proteins" because they have all the essential amino acids that the body needs. Plant proteins, such as legumes (beans, peas and lentils), grains, nuts and seeds are considered "incomplete proteins" because they are missing one or more of the essential amino acids.

If you eat "complete proteins" and/or a lot of different plant proteins ("incomplete proteins") throughout the day, you'll be sure to get all of your essential amino acids. There is no need to combine different types of proteins at every meal.

### What about iron?

Red meat is one of the best sources of iron. When you don't eat red meat, then you need to get iron from other foods. Eat bread, pasta and cereals which are fortified with iron. Meat alternatives, such as eggs, legumes, nuts and seeds, are loaded with iron. Dried fruit and dark leafy green vegetables are also good sources of iron. To help the iron be better absorbed in your body, eat a food which is high in vitamin C with your meals. Vitamin C is found in many foods including oranges, grapefruit, clementines, tangerines, lemons, cantaloupe, papaya, strawberries, tomatoes, broccoli, cauliflower and sweet peppers.

### Is calcium going to be a problem?

If you're drinking milk and eating other milk products, such as cheese and yogurt, then calcium should not be a problem. Just make sure that you're eating at least three to four servings of milk products every day.

If you're not eating any milk products, then you need to get your calcium from other sources. Try a soy beverage which has been fortified with calcium - it has the same amount of calcium as cow's milk. Green, leafy vegetables such as bok choy, kale, collard greens and mustard greens have calcium.

Almonds, broccoli, kidney beans, soybeans, sardines and tofu made with calcium sulphate are other foods which contain calcium.

## Canada's Food Guide to Healthy

### Eating

The food guide below is for vegetarians and non-vegetarians alike.

#### Grain products

**5 to 12 servings/day**

Examples of 1 serving:

- 1 slice bread
- 1/2 bun or bagel
- 1/2 cup cooked rice or pasta
- 1 ounce or 30 grams of ready-to-eat cereal

#### Milk Products

(and other foods which provide about the same amount of calcium as in one glass of milk)

- 3 to 4 servings/day for teens aged 10-16
- 2 to 4 servings/day for adults

Examples of 1 serving:

- 1 cup milk
- 3/4 cup or 175 grams yogurt
- 1 1/2 ounces or 50 grams or 2 slices cheese
- 1 cup calcium-fortified soy drink
- 1 1/2 cups cooked greens (bok choy, kale)
- 2 cups cooked broccoli
- 3/4 cup almonds
- 1 1/2-2 cups cooked soybeans
- 2 cups baked beans
- 6 medium sardines
- 1/2 - 213 g can salmon with bones
- 2/3 cup or 200 grams tofu made with calcium sulphate

#### Vegetables and fruit

**5 to 10 servings/day**

Examples of 1 serving:

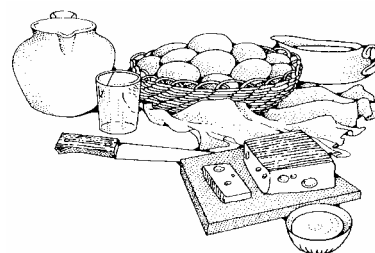
- 1/2 cup cooked vegetables
- 1 cup raw vegetables or fruit
- 1 medium size vegetable or fruit
- 1/2 cup fruit or vegetable juice
- 1/4 cup dried fruit

#### Meat and Alternatives

**2 to 3 servings/day**

Examples of 1 serving:

- 2-3 ounces or 50-100 grams meat, poultry or fish
- 1/2 cup cooked beans, peas or lentils
- 3-4 tablespoons nuts or seeds
- 1/4 cup nuts
- 1/3 cup or 100 grams tofu
- 1-2 eggs
- 2-3 tablespoons peanut butter or other type of nut or seed butter
- 2 slices or 1 patty or 1 wiener imitation meat (made of soy or tofu)



## A day in the life of a vegetarian....

For most teens, the hardest thing about going vegetarian is figuring out which foods to eat in place of meat.

You need nutritious and tasty substitutes for meat which are loaded with protein, iron, calcium and other nutrients. Here are some top vegetarian picks for eating out, at school or home:

- ✓ bean burrito
- ✓ falafel
- ✓ vegetarian chili
- ✓ baked beans
- ✓ peanut butter and jam on a bagel
- ✓ egg salad sandwich
- ✓ hummus on a pita
- ✓ lentil soup
- ✓ macaroni and cheese
- ✓ egg or tofu fried rice
- ✓ vegetarian pizza
- ✓ vegetarian meat sandwich
- ✓ tofu or soy burger or hot dog
- ✓ veggies with bean dip
- ✓ cheese and crackers
- ✓ trail mix
- ✓ bean salad
- ✓ cheese ravioli

## For more information on vegetarianism

### A Teen's Guide to Going Vegetarian

by J. Krizmanic.

Puffin Books, New York, 1994.

An excellent book on how to become a vegetarian. Talks about the basics of vegetarian eating and gives stories and tips from other teen vegetarians.

### Full of Beans

by K. Spicer and V. Currie.

Mighton House, Campbellville, ON, 1993.

A cookbook with plenty of bean recipes.

### Becoming Vegetarian

by V. Melina, B. Davis and V. Harrison.

Macmillan of Canada, Toronto, ON, 1994.

A book filled with information on nutrition and vegetarian recipes. Useful for the new vegetarian or someone who is already a vegetarian.

### The Vegetarian Resource Group

<http://www.vrg.org/nutrition>

A wide variety of information on vegetarian nutrition for all age groups. Also includes an interactive vegetarian game.



Adapted from materials produced by the Public Health Nutritionists/Dietitians in Ontario. Produced by Public Health Nutritionists in the Region of Peel. For more information, please call Health Line Peel at (905) 799-7700

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