

# Vegan Guide to Good Nutrition

Vegetarians and vegans who eat a balanced diet don't lack any of the nutrients that their bodies require. In fact, a diet totally free of animal products is healthier because it contains lots of fruits and vegetables and very little saturated fat.

**People who eat a diet free of animal products are called vegans.** Vegans follow a completely plant-based diet and do not eat anything that comes from an animal, including meat, fish, eggs, dairy products and honey. Vegetarians don't eat meat or fish, but may eat eggs, dairy products or honey.

**Protein**

Important for growth and repair of the body's cells and tissues; for making strong bones and muscles; and for maintaining the immune system.

- Soya foods • Pulses • Broccoli & Spinach • Wholegrain cereals
- Pumpkin seeds
- Nuts

Protein is also present in eggs and dairy products.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Vegetarians and vegans should try to eat a variety of plant proteins to ensure that they get all the required amino acids the body needs. Soya is a 'high quality protein' on its own, and contains a good balance of required amino acids.

**Carbohydrate**

Carbohydrate is the main source of energy for the human body. There are three main types: **simple sugars** (found in fruit and table sugar and sweets), **complex carbohydrates** (or starchy foods) and **dietary fibre** – see section on fibre.

**Complex carbohydrates:**

- Wholegrain cereals
- Potatoes
- Pulses
- Parsnips

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Complex carbohydrates should make up 50% - 70% of all the calories (or energy) that you consume. The skins are the most nutrient-rich part of the potato, so when cooking potatoes, it's best not to peel them first.

**Fibre**

Good for healthy bowels and also to help lower blood cholesterol levels, which is important for reducing the risk of heart disease. It may also help prevent some types of cancer.

- Wholegrain cereals • Fruit
- Nuts • Pulses • Vegetables

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Meat, fish, eggs and dairy products contain no fibre at all. High-fibre foods can help fill you up, which is why they're such a great choice if you want to lose weight.

**Fats**

Having some fat in our diet helps the body absorb some vitamins. Fat is a good source of energy and it provides essential fatty acids that the body can't make itself. There are two main types of fat found in food – **saturated** (see below) and **unsaturated**.

**Unsaturated fats:**

- Olive oil (healthiest oil) • Rapeseed oil (canola)
- Corn oil • Sunflower oil • Soya oil

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Eating a diet that is high in saturated fat can raise the level of cholesterol in your blood, so it's a good idea to eat foods that are rich in unsaturated fat instead. The good news is that a vegetarian diet is low in saturated fats. Vegetarian foods containing saturated fats include butter, cream, cheese, and butter ghee – so you should avoid eating too much of these. It's also best to avoid hydrogenated vegetable fat, as this contains trans fats, which, like saturated fat, raise blood cholesterol.

**Omega 3 Fatty Acids**

The omega 3 fats ALA, EPA and DHA are thought to be important for brain development and for protecting the body's cardiovascular system. EPA and DHA omega 3 fatty acids are not commonly found in vegetarian and vegan diets. Within the body however, ALA omega 3 can be converted into EPA and DHA omega 3 – the important nutrients commonly found in fish oil.

**Omega 3 (ALA sources):**

- Flaxseed oil (culinary linseed oil)
- Hemp seed oil
- Rapeseed oil

**There is also some in:**

- Spinach • Broccoli
- Kidney beans • Romaine lettuce

**DID YOU KNOW?**

EPA and DHA omega 3 fatty acids are created by small algae that live in the sea. Ocean fish are a rich source of these nutrients because they consume the algae and concentrate the nutrients. However, oily fish are not the only source of omega 3 acids. Flaxseed oil is the richest vegetarian food source of ALA omega 3. To obtain its food value, you shouldn't cook with it, but instead add it to a salad dressing or mix it into a fruit smoothie.

## Minerals...

**Iron**

Important for healthy blood.

- Pulses • Soya foods • Green leafy vegetables • Wholegrain cereals • Nuts • Seeds
- Dried fruit (figs, dates and apricots)

Iron is also present in eggs.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Soya veggie burgers typically contain more iron than beef burgers do. It's easier to absorb iron from food if we eat it with foods that contain vitamin C.

**Calcium**

Important for strong bones and teeth.

- Tofu • Green leafy vegetables
- Nuts (esp. brazil & almonds)
- Pulses • Fortified soya milk
- Fortified white bread

Calcium is also present in dairy products.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Fortified soya milk contains as much calcium as dairy milk. An average portion of tofu contains more calcium than an average portion of cheddar cheese.

**Zinc**

Important for healthy-looking skin, hair and nails, and essential for a healthy immune system and resistance to infection.

- Mushrooms
- Spinach & broccoli
- Pumpkin seeds • Peas
- Pulses • Wholegrain cereals

Zinc is also present in dairy products.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Breastfeeding women should include a generous serving of at least one good source of zinc in their diet each day.

**Selenium**

An antioxidant that helps you maintain a healthy immune system and fight disease.

**Brazil nuts (best source) • Button mushrooms**

- Brown rice • Tofu
- Oats (porridge)

Selenium is also present in eggs and dairy products.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

It's a good idea to eat a couple of brazil nuts most days to ensure you get a good supply of selenium.

**Iodine**

Important for the production of thyroid hormones, which help ensure a healthy metabolism.

- Seaweeds such as kelp (kombu) and nori
- Vecon vegetable stock

Iodine is also present in eggs and dairy products.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Powdered seaweed can easily be added to dishes such as soups, curry, chilli, pasta sauce or baked beans, when cooking.

**Magnesium**

Important for bones, nerves and muscles. It also helps turn the food we eat into energy.

- Nuts (particularly almonds & cashew nuts) • Pumpkin seeds • Green leafy vegetables
- Wholegrain cereals • Soya products • Green beans

Magnesium is also present in dairy products.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Pumpkin seeds are delicious lightly roasted in the oven. By roasting them for a short time at a low temperature you can help to preserve their healthy oils.

## Vitamins...

**Vitamin A**

Powerful antioxidant that is important for healthy skin, resistance to infection, healing wounds and protecting the body against disease. Beta-carotene, which gives yellow and orange fruit and vegetables their colour, is turned into vitamin A in the body.

**Carrots (best source) • Green leafy vegetables (especially spinach & watercress) • Red & yellow peppers • Sweet potatoes • Romaine lettuce**

- Tomatoes • Apricots • Mangoes

Vitamin A is also present in eggs and dairy products.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Unlike many other vegetables, carrots are more nutritious when eaten cooked rather than raw (except when they are juiced).

**B Vitamins**

Important for the proper functioning of the brain, heart and nerves, and for blood formation. They also help maintain healthy skin and muscle tone.

- Wholegrain cereals • Nuts • Yeast extract • Mushrooms • Bananas • Peas
- Green leafy vegetables (esp. spinach)
- Avocados

B vitamins are also present in eggs and dairy products.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

There are eight vitamins in the B group. These are: B1 (thiamine), B2 (riboflavin), B3 (niacin), B5 (pantothenic acid), B6 (pyridoxin), B7 (biotin), B9 (folic acid) and B12 (see below).

**Vitamin B12**

Important for healthy blood and nerve function, and growth and development in children.

**Fortified products including:**

- Nutritional yeast flakes such as Engenvita • Some vegetable margarines • Some yeast extracts (e.g. Marmite)

Vitamin B12 is also present in dairy products and eggs.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Vitamin B12 is not found in any plant foods. Vegans need to eat foods fortified with B12 or take B12 supplements.

**Vitamin C**

Powerful antioxidant that is important for healthy skin, teeth and gums. Also for resistance to infection, healing wounds and protecting the body against disease. Helps the body to absorb iron.

- Papaya • Red pepper • Broccoli
- Blackcurrants • Strawberries • Oranges
- Kiwi fruit • Potatoes

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Scurvy is a disease resulting from a deficiency of vitamin C. Years ago the disease was common among sailors who were aboard ships at sea for longer than perishable fruits and vegetables could be stored.

**Vitamin D**

Helps your body absorb calcium and form healthy bones and teeth and is important for a healthy immune system.

**Fortified foods including:**

- Sunlight on the skin
- Some soya milk
- Some vegetable margarines
- Some breakfast cereals

Vitamin D is also present in eggs.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Vitamin D is produced naturally in our bodies when our skin is exposed to sunlight. In the winter, it is a good idea to eat foods fortified with vitamin D to ensure that you are getting enough.

**Vitamin K**

Important for blood clotting and healing wounds. It is also thought to have a role in building strong bones.

**Green leafy vegetables such as:** • Kale • Spinach • Romaine lettuce • Brussels sprouts • Broccoli • Potatoes

**DID YOU KNOW?**

As well as obtaining vitamin K from food, we also get some from our own bodies because it's produced by bacteria in our intestines.

**For more information, contact:**

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 Tel: 01732 364546 Email: [info@animalaid.org.uk](mailto:info@animalaid.org.uk) [www.animalaid.org.uk](http://www.animalaid.org.uk)

### Quick healthy guide:

- Pulses**
- Beans (baked beans, kidney beans, butter beans, etc)
  - Green peas • Chickpeas
  - Lentils • Peanuts

- Wholegrain cereals**
- Breakfast cereals (such as porridge oats, shredded wheat, Weetabix & muesli)
  - Pasta & spaghetti
  - Bread
  - Rice • Noodles

- Nuts**
- Almonds • Brazil nuts • Walnuts
  - Cashew nuts
  - Hazelnuts

- Seeds**
- Sunflower seeds
  - Pumpkin seeds
  - Sesame seeds

- Soya foods**
- Veggie burgers & sausages (made from soya)
  - Soya milk • Soya mince
  - Tofu

- Green leafy vegetables**
- Broccoli • Okra
  - Cabbage • Spinach
  - Watercress