

TITLE

A Vegetarian Diet: Is It Right for You?

DATE

05.27.03

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ABSTRACT

Your doctor tells you to avoid eating meat, but is going completely vegetarian something you should do? Is it something you even want to do? Find out.

BODY

If you're considering becoming a vegetarian, you're in good company—more than 30 million Americans have investigated this eating alternative. [1A]

There are solid reasons for eating a diet low in fat and high in fiber and other key nutrients: research has shown that doing so helps prevent several diseases, including heart disease and cancer. [1B, 2A, and 2B] But if you're used to eating red meat, you may wonder if you'll like a vegetarian diet or whether the meals will be tasteless and boring. Not at all!

Consumer demand has transformed the world of vegetarianism; new products are being introduced all the time and are usually easy to find at your local grocery store. [1C and 1D] You've probably heard of veggie burgers—and maybe you've tried one. [1D] They've been around for awhile, but the increasing popularity of the vegetarian lifestyle has led food producers to create a variety of new and delicious selections. [1D]

From soy-based products to pre-cooked, easy-to-use food items such as “hot dogs,” “ground beef,” and “chicken” nuggets, there's a wide array of products available for you to try. [1C, 1E, 1F, 1G, and 2C]

Some people worry that they won't get enough protein on a vegetarian diet, but there's plenty of protein in soy-based foods, as well as in some other bean- and grain-based products. [1G] Soy products can be used in several delectable ways:

- Try adding soybeans to chili, pasta, or stir fry dishes. [2D]
- Steamed or lightly sautéed, soybeans are terrific on their own. [2D]
- Any recipe that calls for milk will benefit from soy milk. [2E] You can use soy milk on cereal, too. [2E] Also, try adding flavoring to soy milk for a great snack. [2E]
- When baking, soy flour can substitute for up to 20 percent of regular flour. [2F]

- You'll find "textured soy protein" in the frozen food section. [2C] It looks like browned ground beef, and it works beautifully in recipes like meatloaf, tacos, and chili. [2C]

Here are several other suggestions to help you investigate whether vegetarianism is right for you:

1. Allocate a little extra time at the grocery store so you can check out new products and read ingredient labels. [1H and 3A] Only by doing so can you discover whether something unexpected has been added—salt or fat, for instance. [3B] Understanding terminology helps you make smart decisions; for example, if an item is labeled "Reduced" or "Less," that means that it contains 25 percent less of whatever is referred to than does the regular version. [3B]
2. Stock up on fruit and vegetables for easy snacking at home. [1I] That way, when you want something to nibble on, there'll be something healthy ready to go.
3. Experiment with new recipes. [1J] As vegetarianism's popularity grows, so too does the availability of cookbooks and meatless recipes that are featured in the media. [1J]
4. Order a vegetarian meal at a restaurant. [1K] It's a great way to try new foods!

Eating a vegetarian diet can be healthy and delicious! Enjoy!

Sources:

- 1.) "Meat-Free' Goes Mainstream." American Dietetic Association Website. May 2003.
- 2.) "Heart-healthy eating." Mayo Clinic Website. January 2002.
- 3.) "Make Healthy Food Choices." American Heart Association Website. May 2003.