



Heart-Healthy Eating Vegetarian Style

Advice from the National Lipid Association Clinician's Lifestyle Modification Toolbox

Why Choose a Vegetarian or Vegan, Plant-Based Eating Pattern?

A vegetarian and vegan eating patterns are a way to eat heart-healthy. This pattern of eating can help decrease your LDL ("bad") cholesterol level and reduce your blood pressure. In fact, research studies have shown that vegetarians and vegans have an overall lower risk for heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, and some types of cancer.

The Basics of Vegetarian or Vegan Eating Patterns

Vegetarian and vegan eating patterns exclude meat and poultry. Vegetarians eat legumes, soy proteins, vegetables, fruits, whole grains, dairy alternatives (soy or almond milk and yogurt) and healthy fats in liquid vegetable oils, avocado, nuts and seeds. Some vegetarians eat eggs, low-fat (1%) or fat-free dairy products referred to as lacto-ovo vegetarians and others eat fish and are known as pescatarians. Those who eat only plant-based foods are vegans. Vegans eat legumes, soy proteins, vegetables, fruits, whole grains, dairy alternatives and healthy fats and avoid dairy, eggs and fish.

Tips for Eating More Plant-Based Foods

Eat lots of vegetables. Fill at least $\frac{1}{2}$ your plate with a variety of brightly colored vegetables ... think colors of the rainbow.

Choose plant-based protein. Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with soy (tofu, edamame, textured soy protein) or legumes (kidney, pinto, and black beans) and lentils. Choose a soy burger or veggie burger instead of a hamburger or turkey burger. Use beans and lentils in casseroles, pasta dishes, soups, and salads instead of meat.

Accent foods with healthy fats, like extra-virgin olive oil in cooking and with salads, avocado slices on salads or tofu wraps, and 1 oz. a day of many kinds of unsalted nuts or seeds with meals and as snacks.



Choose fiber-rich whole grains. Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate with brown and wild rice, barley, bulgur, quinoa, other whole grains, or starchy vegetables, like green peas, sweet potatoes, yams, corn, and winter squash. Choose whole-grain breads and cereals, including oats.

Choose many kinds of fruits, like fresh and frozen fruits with no added sugar or dried fruit for dessert.

Choose healthy dairy alternatives, like fortified soy, rice or almond milk with no added sugar instead of cow's milk. Replace cheese with soy cheese.

Vegetarian/Vegan Meal Ideas There are many ways to make vegetarian meals. Some ideas are:

- **Breakfast:** Oatmeal with berries and raw nuts or whole-wheat toast with almond butter, and berries; soy milk with no added sugar; coffee or tea with no sugar; and water to drink.
- **Lunch:** Baked tofu in a whole-wheat wrap with arugula, olives, mustard, and cucumber; navy bean soup; fresh apple; and water or other calorie-free beverage to drink.
- **Snacks:** Raw almonds and seeds; fresh, raw cut-up vegetables; fresh fruit; and water to drink.
- **Dinner:** Vegan pumpkin and black bean chili with onions, low-sodium diced tomatoes and spices, whole-grain roll, seasonal fresh fruit, and fortified almond milk with no added sugar or water to drink.

A registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help you make a heart-healthy meal plan that works best for your lifestyle and support you in your nutrition journey. Talk with an RDN for the answers to your nutrition questions.