



## RD Resources for Consumers:

# Vegetarian Teens

**Teenagers represent the fastest growing segment of vegetarians in the United States.**

Many teens choose a vegetarian diet because of environmental and ethical concerns regarding meat production and consumption. With some planning, a vegetarian diet can provide you with all the nutrients you need and foods you enjoy.

## Types of Vegetarians

**Lacto-ovo:** Includes dairy products such as milk, cheese, yogurt, and eggs but excludes meat, poultry, and fish.

**Lacto:** Includes dairy products but excludes eggs and foods containing eggs as well as meat, poultry and fish.

**Vegan:** Includes only foods of plant origin and excludes meat or animal products such as milk or eggs. A vegan diet consists of fruits, vegetables, beans, grains, seeds, and nuts.

## Eating a Healthy Diet

Choose a variety of foods, including whole-grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, and seeds using the Vegetarian Food Pyramid found at:

<http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/vegetarian.html>

If you consume milk or dairy products, choose low-fat or fat-free products. Vegans should include a source of vitamin B-12 daily and vitamin D if sun exposure is limited.

## Vegetarian Meal Ideas

### Breakfast

- Cereal with soymilk, or cow's milk
- Whole-wheat toast with margarine or jelly and a piece of fruit
- Instant oatmeal with nuts, raisins, and soymilk or cow's milk

### Lunch

- Vegetable sandwich (tomatoes, peppers, onions, avocado) with or without cheese on whole-grain bread
- Vegetable soup with a piece of toast
- Veggie burger or falafel with soy cheese, mushrooms, and tomato on a whole-grain bun
- Pita bread filled with veggies or peanut butter
- Chili with beans and textured vegetable protein

### Dinner

- Tofu stir-fry with brown rice
- Pasta with tomato sauce plus vegetables (mushrooms, tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, and onions)
- Tacos or burritos filled with beans, textured vegetable protein, tofu, or tempeh
- Pizza with or without cheese and topped with vegetables, tofu, or meat substitute

### Snacks

- Dried fruits
- Trail mix
- Popcorn
- Rice cakes
- Yogurt
- Smoothies made with calcium fortified rice milk, soymilk, or cow's milk
- Hummus
- Bagels with nut butter
- Instant soups

## Food Sources of Important Nutrients to Consider

### Protein

- Beans
- Whole-grains
- Soy products
- Nuts & nut butters
- Dairy products
- Eggs

### Iron\*

- Beans
- Green leafy vegetables (e.g. kale, collard greens)
- Fortified breads and cereals
- Instant oatmeal
- Nuts & nut butters
- Potatoes (eaten with their skin)
- Enriched pasta
- Dried fruit

**tip** Consuming a good source of vitamin C (e.g. citrus fruits, orange juice, tomatoes) at each meal increases iron absorption.

### Calcium\*

- Cow's milk
- Fortified soymilk or rice milk
- Leafy green vegetables
- Broccoli
- Beans
- Calcium-fortified juice
- Calcium-set tofu
- Almonds and almond butter
- Sesame seeds and sesame butter (e.g. tahini)
- Soy nuts
- Blackstrap molasses
- Figs



### Vitamin B12

- Vitamin B12-fortified foods (such as nutritional yeast, soymilk, meat analogs, or ready-to-eat cereals. Be sure to check the label.)
- Dairy products
- Eggs

**tip** A daily vitamin B-12 supplement of 5 to 10 ug or a weekly B-12 supplement of 2,000 ug may be used.

### Vitamin D

- Eggs
- Vitamin D-fortified foods (such as soymilk, cow's milk, orange juice, ready-to-eat cereals)
- Vitamin D is also made in the skin from sunlight

**tip** Vegetarians who do not consume vitamin D sources or receive direct sunlight on a regular basis should consider taking a vitamin D supplement.

\*Vegetarians should consume a variety of iron and calcium sources in order to meet daily requirements.

## Vegetarian Glossary of Terms

**Casein:** A milk protein sometimes used in otherwise non-dairy products like soymilk, soy cheese, and non-dairy creamer.

**Legumes:** The vegetable family that includes beans, lentils, peas, and peanuts, all of which are excellent sources of vegetarian protein.

**Nutritional Yeast:** A health supplement grown on molasses, sugar beets, or wood pulp. A rich source of vitamin B and protein.

**Rennet:** An enzyme from the stomach of slaughtered calves, used to coagulate cheese. Found in many, but not all, dairy cheeses.

**Seitan (also called wheat gluten):** A vegetarian replacement for meat, made of protein (gluten) extracted from flour.

**Soybean:** An Asian legume which is an excellent, inexpensive vegan source of protein and iron. Soybeans are used to make a number of vegetarian and vegan substitutions for meat, dairy, and eggs.

**Soy cheese:** A cheese-like product made from soybeans. Soy cheeses come in most of the same varieties as dairy cheeses - parmesan, mozzarella, cheddar, etc. However, some soy cheeses are not vegan as they contain the animal protein casein.

**Soymilk:** A milk-like product made from soybeans, with the same amount of protein and less fat than cow's milk. However, some soymilks are not vegan as they contain the animal protein casein.

**Tempeh:** A replacement for meat, made from fermented soybeans.

**Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP):** Derived from soy flour, TVP is commonly used in vegetarian restaurants as a substitute for ground beef.

**Tofu:** A replacement for meat, eggs, and cheese, made from curdled soymilk pressed into blocks. Tofu can be eaten fresh or cooked in many different ways and is an excellent source of protein.

### Types & Uses

- Extra-firm tofu – frying, roasting, grilling, marinating
- Firm tofu – stir-frying, boiling, filling
- Soft tofu – puréeing
- Silken tofu – puréeing, simmering, egg substitution, used in vegan desserts and smoothies

## Vegetarian Nutrition

a dietetic practice group of the

**eat right.** Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

RD Resources are a project of the Vegetarian Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group. More topics available at [www.VegetarianNutrition.net](http://www.VegetarianNutrition.net). Professional resources also available for members at [www.VNDPG.org](http://www.VNDPG.org). © 2008 by VN DPG.

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