

IS IT NECESSARY TO EAT ANIMAL PRODUCTS TO BE HEALTHY?

According to the American Dietetic Association (ADA), as well as numerous other health organizations, well planned vegan diets are healthy and nutritionally adequate. In 2009, the ADA stated that:

“It is the position of the American Dietetic Association that appropriately planned vegetarian diets, including total vegetarian or vegan diets, are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and may provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases. Well-planned vegetarian diets are appropriate for individuals during all stages of the life cycle, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, and adolescence, and for athletes.”

Any unbalanced, unhealthy diet may lead to health problems. Planning and balance are important, even for vegans. It's possible to be vegan and unhealthy, but the fact remains: you can be healthy on a well-planned vegan diet.



VEGAN NUTRITION

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WHAT ARE THE COMMON DIETARY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VEGANS?

The nutritional requirements of individuals vary, and scientific understanding of nutrition continues to evolve. The consistent recommendation from health and dietary organization is that vegans should ensure intake of an appropriate amount of calories overall for age, sex, lifestyle, etc., and eat a varied diet with foods rich in calcium, iron, vitamin D, vitamin B12, zinc and other nutrients. The following is not a complete list:

PROTEIN

Plant sources of protein include soy and wheat products (e.g., tofu, tempeh and seitan), beans, lentils, nuts, and seeds.

CALCIUM

Plant sources of calcium include tofu, garbanzo beans or chickpeas, broccoli, kale, turnip, collard and mustard greens, bok choy, sesame seeds, tahini and blackstrap molasses.

IRON

Plant sources of iron include various beans, tofu, spinach, raisins, and blackstrap molasses.

ZINC

Plant sources of zinc include beans, cashews, chickpeas, sesame seeds, tahini, and pepitas (pumpkin seeds).

OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

Plant sources of Omega-3s include flax seeds, walnuts, and soybeans.

VITAMIN B12

Plant sources of B12 include foods fortified with B12, such as plant milks (soy, rice, oat, nut, seed milks, etc.), breakfast cereals, and nutritional yeast.

VITAMIN D

Plant sources of vitamin D include sunlight! But also mushrooms grown in sunlight and foods fortified with Vitamin D2. Note, however, that most sources of Vitamin D3 are not plant-derived.

Whole foods are a good source of varied nutrition. It's worth noting, however, that one cup of many common brands of fortified plant milks provides 45% calcium, 30% vitamin D, and 50% vitamin B12 of the daily intake requirements. Many cereals are fortified in the United States and Canada. Fortification for cereals, plant milks, and other foods, however, vary by brand and by region. Many products not be fortified at all. Be sure to check the label for nutritional information.

Supplements for B12, Omega-3 Fatty Acids and other vitamins and minerals are available. Blood tests through your physician can help you determine whether you are getting ample amounts of iron, B12 and other concerns over time. General nutritional guidance shouldn't replace consultation with an appropriate health professional to discuss your dietary needs if you have any concerns.

