

Vegetarians 1

About one-quarter of the 6.5 billion people in the world eat a vegetarian diet.

A vegetarian does not eat any meat, poultry, game, fish, shellfish, crustacea or animal products, such as gelatin or animal fat such as suet. A vegetarian lives on a diet of grains, pulses, nuts, seeds, vegetables and fruits, with or without the use of dairy products and eggs. A strict vegetarian avoids products that come from animals, which include food, toiletries, clothes and household goods. Only cheeses marked suitable for vegetarians are eaten by strict vegetarians, as many cheeses contain animal rennet. Vegetarian cheeses are now widely available.

Vegetarians as a group have low rates of obesity, coronary heart disease and high blood pressure.

Types of vegetarian

- **Lacto ovo vegetarians** do not eat meat, poultry or fish, but will eat eggs and dairy products such as milk, yogurt, butter and cheese.
- **Lacto vegetarians** do not eat meat, poultry, fish or eggs, but will eat dairy products.
- **Vegans** do not eat any animal products, which include meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products and bee products like honey.

Why do people choose a vegetarian diet?

There are many reasons why people choose to be vegetarians.

- **Religion** – vegetarianism is the dietary choice of several religions.
- **Health** – some people think that a vegetarian diet is healthier than one containing meat and meat products.
- **Animal welfare** – some people believe it is wrong to kill animals for food, or they object to intensive farming.
- **Taste** – some people do not like the taste of meat.
- **Environmental issues** – some people think that meat production is expensive compared with cereal and crop production, and that it is wasteful in resources and pollutes the environment.

WEBSITES

Vegetarian Society

Vegan Society

KEY TERMS

Lacto ovo vegetarians

vegetarians who do not eat meat, but eat eggs and dairy products

Lacto vegetarians vegetarians who do not eat meat or eggs, but eat dairy products

Vegans vegetarians who do not eat any food from animals

Nutritional challenges

If vegetarians do not eat dairy products, they will need to find other sources of calcium, vitamin B2 and B12. Vegans may have low intakes of iron and zinc.

Good sources of nutrients include:

- protein from cereals, soya products, pulses and nuts and seeds
- wholegrain breads and breakfast cereals are fortified with nutrients
- dried fruits such as sultanas, figs, prunes and apricots contain iron.

By eating plenty of cereals, pulses, nuts and seeds, vegetarians have plenty of dietary fibre. This can mean their diet is bulky. For children, nutrient-dense food choices are important.



The Vegetarian Society logo.

Important nutrients for vegetarians

Nutrient	Why it is needed	Sources
Protein	Growth and repair	Milk, cheese, eggs, yogurt, soya milk, tofu, beans, lentils, peas, cereals, nuts and seeds
Iron	Healthy blood and forming haemoglobin; to prevent anaemia	Dried fruit (such as apricots), molasses, beans, lentils, egg yolks, wholegrain cereals and green vegetables
Vitamin C	Helps absorption of iron	Fresh, frozen and juice fruit and vegetables
Calcium	Healthy bones and teeth	Milk, cheese, soya, beans and chickpeas
Vitamin B12	Formation of red blood cells	Soya products, fortified breakfast cereals and bread, yeast extract
Vitamin D	Healthy bones and tissues	Sunlight, some margarines, soya milks
Selenium	Healthy immune system	Nuts such as Brazil nuts
Iodine	Needed to prevent thyroid problems	Iodised salt and kelp

QUESTIONS

1. List the different types of vegetarians.
2. Give two reasons why people might eat a vegetarian diet.
3. Name three nutrients that are important to vegetarians who do not eat animal products.