



Going Vegetarian

Types of vegetarians

- **Vegans** – Eat only foods of plant origin.
- **Fruitarianism** – Eat mainly fruits, nuts, honey and vegetable oils.
- **Lacto-vegetarians** - Eat foods of plant origin AND dairy products.
- **Lacto – ovo – vegetarians** – Eat foods of plant origin AND dairy products AND eggs.
- **Pescatarian** – Eat fish, but no meat
- **Omnivore** – Eat foods of both plant and animal origin.

Is going vegetarian safe and better?

With all the controversy regarding the use of hormones in meat and poultry or the issue of whether or not free range or organic products are any better, the option to become vegetarian may be sounding quite appealing. However, simply giving up animal products like meat/chicken/eggs or milk/yoghurt/cheese, does not necessarily mean we automatically become healthier and better! There is just so much more to becoming a vegetarian! If your diet is not planned carefully you could actually end up with nutrient deficiencies where you miss out on essential nutrients (like amino acids, iron, vitamin B12, calcium, magnesium, to mention a few) We had a patient who decided she wanted to become a vegan (no meat, chicken, fish, eggs or milk, cheese). Quite innocently she just cut out these foods but didn't replace those vital nutrients either through food combining or through supplementation. She broke her leg, and instead of taking the usual 6 weeks to heal she took 11 weeks! On top of this her hair started falling out and her skin was flaking. Now, even though this is a severe case, all we are saying is that whenever you remove a food from your diet, take the time and effort to ensure that your body gets the full spectrum of nutrients it needs through other sources of food and/or supplementation.

Advantages of the vegetarian diet

- It can be more detoxifying than the usual high fat, high protein diets (because the vegetarian diet usually contains more fruit, vegetables, nuts and dietary fibre).
- Low in saturated fat (a poor fat) and cholesterol, so fantastic for good heart health
- High in fibre (found in fruits, vegetables, beans and lentils) which decreases the incidence of bowel disease and constipation, and lowers cholesterol.
- High in vitamin A, C and E, carotenoids and magnesium.

Getting enough protein

One of the main concerns with going vegetarian is getting in enough protein. Protein, after all contains those wonderful building blocks (amino acids) used to repair and build. Proteins are built from about 20 *amino acids* that are linked together to form chains. Our bodies can make 11 of these 20 needed amino acids. These are called the non-essential amino acids. The other nine amino acids cannot be made by our bodies, therefore must be derived from the diet. These are called essential amino acids. If we do not consume enough of the essential amino acids then the rate at which our bodies synthesise protein is dramatically reduced and our health will deteriorate.

Animal foods (e.g. meat, chicken, fish, eggs, dairy products) give us the full spectrum of amino acids – particularly all the essential amino acids. Animal foods are therefore considered to be **COMPLETE PROTEINS**. Plant proteins (e.g. nuts, seeds, cereals, grains, beans and lentils) are in turn called **INCOMPLETE PROTEINS** as they are missing one or more of the essential amino acids, and if eaten alone will not provide the body with adequate supplies of amino acids. Since certain plant proteins contain some amino acids which other plant proteins lack and vice versa, it is suggested that vegetarians combine these proteins to formulate a COMPLETE PROTEIN.



Sassy Soy

The only plant that has a complete protein profile is SOY! And, yes, I know what you are thinking "soy tastes so terrible". Unfortunately over the years soy has received such an awful reputation because of its taste in the paste. But, thankfully food manufacturers have jumped on the bandwagon and have introduced a whole new range of very tasty and different soy products. Plus soy is just so much lower in fat, higher in fibre and full of additional health nutrients than animal products.

Did you know?

According to the FDA, having 4 servings of soy per day can reduce your LDL (bad cholesterol) by 10% and can reduce your triglycerides considerably? This is definitely significant since 1 out of every 4 women and 1 out of every 3 women have heart disease in South Africa.

Here are some common sources of soy.

Tofu – it may look like a plain and bland white "blob", but with its neutral flavour it can be used in stir fries, mixed into smoothies or even blended into a smooth "cream cheese texture" and used as dips or as a spread. It can be fried, sautéed, mashed, pureed, grilled, baked . . . which means it can fit into any dish. Tofu is very rich in magnesium, iron, vitamin B12 and phyto estrogens. Tofu is actually made from cooked soybeans that have been pureed, and processed into a custard-like cake. You can buy it in firm or soft textures.

"Soy milk," is a fantastic substitute for normal cow's milk, especially for those of you who are lactose intolerant. In fact soymilk is often fortified with additional calcium, and comes in various flavours (e.g. chocolate, vanilla and strawberry). Soymilk is made by grinding de-hulled soybeans and mixing them with water.

Soy flour is a great way to add protein to baked products. It is a fantastic substitute for eggs in recipes due to its high moisture content. Soy flour is created by grinding roasted soybeans into a fine powder.

Miso is a fermented soybean paste used for seasoning and in soup stock.

Soy protein also is found in many "meat analogue" products, such as soy sausages, burgers, franks, and cold cuts, as well as soy yogurts and cheese, all of which are intended as substitutes for their animal-based counterparts.

Ways to increase the soy in your diet

Even if you are not vegetarian, why not experience the benefits of soy too. It doesn't mean that you have to cut out animal products completely, just start incorporating soy 2 – 3 times a week.

- Create delicious smoothies using fruits with either soymilk or soy protein powder.
- Stir isolated soy protein powder into a cup of LITE hot chocolate.
- Use soymilk or unflavoured isolated soy protein beverages with breakfast cereals, coffee/tea and to make cream sauces that are cholesterol-free and low in saturated fat.
- Substitute a third of your chicken/meat in stir-fries with tofu.
- Use tofu in soups (blended), casseroles (as blocks or blended into sauce), salads (blocks), dips and salad dressings (Blended into olive oil, vinegar and herbs).
- Substitute soy flour for some of the wheat flour in muffin or pancake recipes. As a general rule, for each cup of wheat flour in the recipe, use a ¼ cup of soy flour and ¾ of a cup of wheat flour.
- Grill soy burgers or tofu burgers and serve them on rye rolls with fat-free additions, such as mustard, tomato sauce and relish.



Soy yoghurt made from tofu

Ingredients

360g Tofu

½ Banana (frozen)

1 Banana (fresh)

Optional (for a fruity yoghurt): Frozen berries, apricots, granadillas

1 Teaspoon raw honey

¼ Cup apple juice

Method

Blend all the ingredients together until creamy. Chill in the freezer for half an hour.

Serving suggestion:

Serve over a bowl of slow release cereal (all bran flakes) or low fat muesli.

Add raw oats to the soy yoghurt with some raisins

Serve with a mixture of sunflower, sesame, linseed seeds and raisins/sultanas.

Lentil burgers

Ingredients

1 Cup cooked brown lentils, lightly mashed

1 Cup cooked and mashed sweet potato

½ Cup grated carrots

½ Cup rolled oats

¼ Cup wholemeal breadcrumbs

¼ Cup Oatbran

1 Medium onion, peeled and grated

1 Free range egg, lightly beaten

½ Teaspoon ground cumin

½ Teaspoon tumeric

½ Teaspoon ground coriander

2 Tablespoons chopped parsley

Coating: 3 – 4 tablespoons bran or wheat germ

Method

1. Combine all the ingredients and mix well.

2. With wet hands, firmly shape the mixture into burger patty shapes.

3. Coat each patty in the bran/wheat germ – press in the coating so it sticks to the patty.

4. Spray and cook an oven tray and place patties on the tray.

5. Bake at 220°C for 20 minutes. (Turn the patties over once during the baking).

Serving suggestion

Open up pita pockets and place cooked patty inside with hummus, lettuce, tomato, pepperdews, grilled onions and mushrooms.

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