

Patient information factsheet

A guide to eating well as a vegan

A vegan diet contains only plants (such as vegetables, grains, nuts and fruits) and foods made from plants. Vegans do not eat foods that come from animals, including dairy products and eggs.

If you follow a vegan diet, you may need to make some adjustments to what you usually eat and drink in order to meet your nutritional needs. This factsheet contains some ideas that you can try at home to help add extra calories and protein into your vegan diet, and make it as nutritious and enjoyable as possible.

Some of the following ideas are aimed at people who have a smaller appetite and may be struggling to gain weight, but most of the information is useful for everyone.

Milk alternatives

There are a number of milk alternatives to choose from. Most shops sell own branded versions of these, as well as the branded versions, such as Alpro or Oatly. Where possible, choose versions with added calcium and vitamin D. Soya milk tends to have a higher calorie and protein content, especially if you are able to choose a 'soya protein plus' version. If you are struggling to gain weight, try the 'whole' or 'sweetened' versions, as these will give you more energy.

Nutritious snack ideas

Jacket potatoes, toast, sandwiches, rolls, muffins, crumpets and bagels

- 'Free from' alternatives (available in shops) are often vegan.
- Add fillings or toppings, such as grated vegan cheese, baked beans, scrambled tofu (see recipe suggestion below), vegan butter or vegetable spread, avocado (mashed or sliced), houmous, tahini, or chickpeas with vegan mayo (see recipe suggestion below).
- Fortified (extra nutrients added) nutritional yeast can also be sprinkled over any of these fillings or toppings.

Vegan hot cross buns, teacakes and malt loaf

- Many 'free from' bakery options in supermarkets are suitable for vegans.
- The 'original' malt loaf is not vegan, but other versions are, such as the banana, strawberry or apple malt loaves.
- Add vegan butter or vegetable spread and top with jam, marmalade, nut butters, vegan biscuit spread or chocolate spread.
- Alternatively serve with vegan yoghurt or vegan cream cheese, sliced banana and blueberries.

Soup

- Many fresh, tinned and packet soups are suitable for vegans.
- Choose coconut cream-based options, or those including lentils or grains, as these contain more nutrients.
- Avoid 'healthy' or 'diet' soups if you are struggling to gain weight.

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Ready-to-eat savoury snacks

- Look out for vegan sausage rolls, vegan sausages, tofu pieces, meat-free goujons, falafels, meat-free jerky, ready-made bean mixes, dried bean mixes (often labelled as 'protein mixes'), or slices of vegan pies and pasties.

Cereal bars, biscuits, nuts, seeds, dried fruits, toasted coconut, crisps, chocolates and cakes

- Many pre-made snacks in supermarkets will have the official Vegan Society stamp on the packaging. Many supermarket own brands will also be vegan.

Crackers, oat cakes and breadsticks

- There are various vegan cheeses available to pair with crackers.
- Other toppings include avocado spread, houmous, vegetable pâtés, nut butters, and vegan butter or vegetable spreads.

Breakfast ideas

Cooked breakfast

- Choose a selection of vegan options, such as vegan sausages, vegan bacon, baked beans, hash browns, avocado mash, scrambled tofu, tomatoes and mushrooms.
- Serve alongside toast with vegan butter or vegetable spread.

Toast

- Top with a generous amount of vegan butter or vegetable spread, and then add jam, vegan chocolate or biscuit spread, nut butters, or sliced or mashed avocado.
- Make vegan French toast (soak your bread in your choice of vegan milk and fry).
- Serve with scrambled tofu, baked beans, fried tomatoes or mushrooms (these can be fried and coated in soya cream).
- Make a vegan cheese toastie (use plenty of cheese and vegan butter or vegetable spread when making this).

Cereal

- There are lots of vegan cereals available.
- Add your choice of milk alternative and serve with maple syrup, jams or nut butters.
- Add banana, dried fruit, nuts, seeds and soya yoghurt.

Baked beans and tinned spaghetti

- Serve on toast with vegan butter or vegetable spread, and add vegan grated cheese with fortified nutritional yeast sprinkled on top.

Tofu

- Tofu can be scrambled (mash the tofu before mixing with vegan cheese, soya milk or soya cream, fortified nutritional yeast, and cook in vegetable oil or vegan butter).
- Add in chopped vegan meat-alternatives (ham or chicken slices for example) or chickpeas.
- Serve on toast with vegan butter or vegetable spread.

Avocado

- Avocado makes a great toast topping (slice or mash, and spread it on the toast with vegan butter or vegetable spread).
- Pair it with seeds, chopped nuts or nut butter, tahini, desiccated coconut or vegan cream cheese.
- Alternatively, remove the stone and serve 'stuffed' with tofu scramble and toast.

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Yoghurt

- Choose vegan yoghurts, but avoid 'no sugar' or 'diet' options.
- Add fortified vegan cereals, fruit (fresh, tinned or dried), nuts and seeds, and stir in vegan cream.
- Add your favourite jams, nut butters, and golden or maple syrup.

Porridge

- Make porridge with your choice of fortified sweetened milk alternative.
- Add soya cream, vegan yoghurt alternative, coconut cream, sugar, jams, nut butters, tahini, chopped nuts, seeds, bananas and/or dried fruit.

Main meal ideas

Tofu, tempeh, soy protein and other meat alternatives

- These foods are rich in protein and will help you reach your calcium requirements.
- There are lots of plant-based options available, including Quorn™ and other own-brand vegan products.
- Find ways to regularly include tofu, tempeh and other vegan textured protein into your diet.

Pulses

- Pulses are another excellent protein source.
- Aim for one portion of these a day if possible. Pulses include any kind of beans, peas and lentils, such as baked beans, edamame beans, red or green lentils, chickpeas or kidney beans.
- Supermarkets offer a wide range of tinned beans for you to try, and there are often pre-mixed packages or mixed bean tins which can be added to sauces.

Nuts and seeds

- Nuts and seeds are a good way to include both protein and essential fats in your diet.
- Peanuts are a great addition to curries, cashews can be added to cheese sauces or stir fries, and flaked almonds and mixed seeds can be sprinkled over pasta bakes.
- Smooth nut butters and tahini make good bases for sauces, for example a satay sauce.

Potatoes, pasta, rice, noodles and quinoa

These types of foods (carbohydrates) are an important energy source. We have included some tips below to help you get the most from these options.

Potatoes:

- Cut into chips, roast, sauté, mash or boil.
- Add vegan butter or vegetable spread, your choice of milk alternative, coconut cream, vegan cream cheese, vegan mayonnaise or vegan cream where possible.

Pasta, quinoa and noodles:

- Stir vegetable oil or spread, or vegan butter through before serving.
- Opt for vegan creamy or cheese sauces.
- Add vegan cream cheese and avocado to vegan pasta sauces.
- Serve with grated vegan cheese and fortified nutritional yeast.
- Sprinkle flaked nuts on top.

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Rice:

- Rice can be steamed, boiled or fried.
- Best served with a creamy vegan curry sauce.
- Risotto is an excellent way to serve rice (add vegan cream and/or plenty of vegan grated cheese).
- Add kidney beans, tofu, plant-based meat alternatives, fried vegetables and nuts (such as almonds or cashews).

Vegetables and salad

It is important to include vegetables and salad in your diet, as they provide vitamins and minerals. However, they are low in protein and energy, and can be filling, so if you are trying to gain weight, here are some ways to make them more nourishing:

- Fry vegetables in oil or vegan butter, and add flaked nuts or grated vegan cheese.
- Add a vegan white sauce to vegetables, such as cauliflower, broccoli or leeks.
- If you are making a salad, add nuts, falafel, vegan cheese, avocado, pulses (such as chickpeas), croutons, olives, dried fruits, seeds, vegan meat alternatives (such as tofu pieces) and serve with houmous, vegan mayonnaise, vegan salad cream or any other vegan salad dressing.
- If you have fortified nutritional yeast, this can be added as an extra to the ideas above.

How to increase the energy in your food

- Always choose full fat products rather than 'low fat' or 'diet' options.
- Whenever possible, add vegan butter, vegetable spread or oil, and serve with vegan cheese or a vegan white sauce.
- Add vegan grated cheese, soya cream and fortified nutritional yeast to soups, casseroles, mashed potatoes and cooked vegetables.
- Add condiments to meals, such as vegan mayonnaise, guacamole, vegan salad cream and vegan dips (for example baba ghanoush).

Dessert ideas

Most desserts are high in energy and can be eaten between or after meals. Avoid 'low fat' or 'diet' versions.

Shop-bought puddings

- Try vegan versions of crème caramel, yoghurts, rice puddings, chocolate puddings or cheesecakes.

Pies, crumbles, pastries, sponges and cakes

- Serve with vegan versions of cream, ice cream, custard and dessert sauces.

Ice cream

- There are a number of vegan ice creams available to buy. Add different toppings, such as jams, tinned fruits, nuts, seeds and vegan dessert sauces.

'Milk' puddings

- Rice pudding, custard powder and blancmange can be made up with vegan milk alternatives.
- Stir in extra vegan cream, coconut milk, jam, golden or maple syrup, vegan chocolate or biscuit spread, or nut butters.

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Fruit

- If you have fruit for dessert, pair it with something else, such as vegan ice cream or soya cream, or incorporate it into another vegan pudding rather than having it on its own.
- If you choose tinned fruit and you are trying to gain weight, choose fruit in syrup. If you have diabetes, you should choose fruit in juice or water.

Supplements

Following a vegan diet means that there are certain nutrients that may be difficult to get from food alone. You should supplement your vegan diet with a daily multivitamin and mineral supplement. Vegan options are available at health food shops and some larger pharmacy chains, such as Boots.

Vitamins and minerals to be particularly aware of:

Vitamin D

- 10mcg daily
- Vitamin D3 from lichen or D2 are animal-free options
- Foods that contain vitamin D include sun-ripened mushrooms, fortified vegetable spreads, fortified cereals and dairy alternatives

Vitamin B12

- At least 10mcg daily or at least 200mcg weekly
- Foods that contain vitamin B12 include some fortified breakfast cereals, fortified dairy alternatives, marmite and fortified nutritional yeast (these will contribute to your overall intake)

Iodine

- 140mcg daily
- Can also be found within 500ml of milk alternative with added iodine

Selenium

- 60mcg for women and 75mcg for men
- Vegan foods that contain selenium include grains, seeds and nuts

Iron

- Vegan foods that contain iron include dried fruits, wholegrains, nuts, leafy green vegetables, seeds and pulses

Calcium

- Vegan foods that contain calcium include fortified vegan dairy-alternative products (such as milk, yoghurt and cheese), dried fruits, nuts, leafy green vegetables, red kidney beans, sesame seeds, tahini and tofu

Omega 3 fats

- Vegan foods that contain omega 3 fats include nuts, seeds, soya beans and cooking oils (hemp, rapeseed and flaxseed oils are higher than other vegetable oils)

Zinc

- Vegan foods that contain zinc include some fortified breakfast cereals, fermented soya products (such as tempeh and miso), beans, wholegrains, nut and seeds

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Example vegan meal plan

Breakfast ideas:

- Porridge with fortified soya milk, topped with seeds and jam. Serve with a glass of fruit juice.
- Cooked breakfast of scrambled tofu, vegan sausages, hash browns, fried tomato, baked beans and toast with vegan butter.

Mid-morning snack ideas:

- Milky coffee (made with a milk alternative), and a crumpet with vegan butter or vegetable spread, peanut butter or jam.

Lunch ideas:

- Jacket potato with vegan butter or vegetable spread, baked beans, sliced avocado and vegan cheese.
- Creamy coconut mushroom risotto with green vegetables, served with vegan butter and vegan sausages.
- Stir fry (using vegan butter or vegetable spread) with cashew nuts and tofu pieces.
- Chilled soya pudding for dessert.

Mid-afternoon snack ideas:

- Chickpea falafels with mashed avocado or a vegan dip, olives and a generous handful of nuts.
- Warm slice of vegan fruit loaf with vegan butter or vegetable spread, and nut butter.
- Vegan chocolate avocado milkshake (see recipe suggestion below).

Evening meal ideas:

- Chickpea 'mayo' sandwich with your choice of crisps.
- Vegan bean shepherd's pie (add plenty of vegan cheese and butter to the potato topping).
- Vegan rice pudding with jam or tinned fruit and vegan custard for dessert.

Before bed snack ideas:

- Oatcakes topped with apple slices and nut butter.
- A toasted teacake topped with vegan butter or vegetable spread and jam.
- Soya yoghurt with oats or cereal, nuts, seeds, and dried or tinned fruit.
- Vegan hot chocolate made with soya milk.

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Recipes

Chickpea 'mayo' sandwich (alternative to tuna mayo) (serves two)

Ingredients

200g chickpeas
2 tbsp vegan mayonnaise
2 slices of bread
Salt and pepper (to taste)

Method

1. Gently mash the chickpeas in a bowl until you reach a desired consistency.
2. Add the vegan mayonnaise and mix together.
3. Season the chickpea mix with salt and pepper.
4. Toast the bread (if preferred) and spread with vegan butter. Add any other sandwich fillers you enjoy, such as vegan cheese.
5. Add the chickpea mix to your bread.

Top tips

To enhance the flavour of the chickpeas, you could:

- add a small scoop ($\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp) of mustard to the mayonnaise
- add some finely chopped red onion, some herbs (such as dill) or some sunflower seeds
- try this filling with a jacket potato

Chocolate avocado shake (serves four)

Ingredients

1 ripened banana (peeled)
3 tbsp chocolate powder
2 tsp coconut oil
1 ripe avocado (peeled and destoned)
2 tbsp maple syrup
750ml soya milk

Method

1. Chop the banana and the avocado.
2. Blend all of the ingredients together until smooth.
3. Place the shake mixture in the fridge until you are ready to serve. Ideally drink within same day of making.

Chocolate nut butter smoothie (serves two)

Ingredients

500ml coconut water
1 tbsp golden syrup
2 ripe bananas (peeled)
2 small avocados (peeled and destoned)
1 tbsp cocoa powder
1 tsp vanilla extract
2 tbsp nut butter

Method

1. Chop the banana and the avocado.
2. Blend all of the ingredients together until smooth.

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Tofu scramble (serves two)

Most recipes for vegan 'scrambled eggs' rely solely on the tofu and seasoning. However, this recipe is a higher calorie version that includes a sauce.

Ingredients

1 tbsp fortified nutritional yeast

60ml soya milk

½ tsp mustard

1 tbsp vegan butter

½ block of tofu (drained and crumbled)

Vegetable oil, vegan butter or vegan spread

Flavourings: paprika, turmeric, ground garlic, onion powder, black pepper and salt

Method

1. Crumble the tofu into a medium-sized bowl with your fingers.
2. Heat the vegetable oil or butter in a medium-sized saucepan on a medium to low heat.
3. Add the crumbled tofu, soya milk, mustard and the flavourings of your choice to the saucepan. Stir to combine.
4. Cook for a further six to eight minutes, so that the tofu is heated all the way through and the soya milk is beginning to evaporate to create a sauce.
5. Once you reach your desired consistency (you can always add more soya milk), stir through the nutritional yeast.
6. Serve on bread or toast.

Top tip

To increase the calorie content, serve with grated vegan cheese (on top or mixed through).

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Useful links

www.myvegansupermarket.co.uk

www.bda.uk.com/food-health/food-facts.html

www.vegansociety.com

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