

What about Vitamin B12?

Everyone needs to make sure they are getting enough Vitamin B12. It is an extremely important vitamin which is manufactured by certain kinds of bacteria. It is a myth that vegans automatically suffer from B12 deficiency; in fact they are less likely to, because vegans go out of their way to educate themselves about its importance and take steps to ensure that we supplement our diets with an adequate supply.

B12 deficiency is often related to an individual body's inability to *absorb* the vitamin, and can effect anyone, independent of their diet. Everyone should get their Vitamin B12 levels checked, the most specific test for B12 status being *methymalonic acid* (MMA) testing. Speak to your doctor about requesting this particular method of measuring your body's B12 status. Vegans obtain their Vitamin B12 from supplements such as vegan B12 tablets or sublingual drops, and/or B12 fortified foods. We do not need to consume animal products to obtain Vitamin B12, and the bacteria can be manufactured without using animals. Please take responsibility for your health and get your B12 level checked, and speak to a doctor or nutritionist familiar with vegan diets to get advice about the best vegan source for your individual needs.

Marmite, So Good & Vitasoy® Soy Milks and Lotus brand Nutritional Yeast are Vitamin B12 fortified foods that are available in NZ "with the exception of Vitasoy "Calci-Plus" soy milk which contains Vitamin D3 and is **NOT** vegan.

...and Vitamin D?

This is another very important vitamin that everyone should be mindful of. In reality Vitamin D is also a hormone that our skin manufactures from the ultraviolet rays of the sun. Sunshine is a great natural form of Vitamin D, and even fair-skinned people should try to get a few minutes of sunshine a day on bare skin. There is no need to risk skin cancer—just a few minutes of mild sun on your arms or hands is a helpful way to obtain a natural source of Vitamin D. If you are very fair-skinned then you can do so when the sun is mild, such as in the mornings and late afternoons. Vitamin D deficiency is becoming a worldwide concern, therefore you may also choose to consume a dietary supplement, especially if you are someone who is suffering from low Vitamin D levels. The vegan source of dietary Vitamin D is D2 (*ergocalciferol*), usually synthetic or manufactured from yeast. It can be obtained in a tablet form, or found in supplemented foods such as some soy milks. **Vitamin D3 is NOT vegan.** If you are curious about your own Vitamin D level, you can schedule a 25(OH)D (25-hydroxyvitamin D) blood test.

*It is our individual responsibility to maintain our health and wellbeing, and we each have the means to do so, through eating a balanced vegan diet, supplemented with certain vitamins from vegan sources where needed, making sure we get enough exercise and rest, and avoiding activities that are harmful to us and those with whom we share this earth.*

A Balanced Vegan Diet.

A healthy balanced vegan diet is made up of four food groups: 1. legumes, nuts & seeds; 2. grains; 3. fruits and 4. vegetables.

1. Legumes, nuts and seeds (4+ servings per day):

This group includes beans, split peas, lentils, nuts, seeds and also soy products. It's not a *requirement* to consume soy products in order to have a balanced vegan diet, and not all vegans consume soy products. However for those who like soy, it is an extremely versatile food that can be used in a variety of ways.

2. Grains (4-6+ servings per day):

Whole grains are preferable to refined grains, because the refining process removes the healthiest nutrients. Brown rice, oats, millet and quinoa are fantastic sources of B vitamins, fiber, minerals, proteins and antioxidants. For gluten intolerant individuals, rice, millet and quinoa are gluten-free. They can be prepared in a variety of ways, from pilafs and spicy savoury dishes to salads. Quinoa and millet are considered "superfoods". In New Zealand, the most affordable kind of quinoa tends to be the white quinoa.



3. Vegetables (4+ servings per day):

The vegetable world is full of colour and nutrients and variety. Eating a wide variety of colourful vegetables is not only delicious and creative, but extremely healthy and provides an assortment of protective nutrients in your diet. It is impossible to list all the wonderful vegetables that there are available. It is recommended to buy what is in season in your country at the time, as that is nature's way of letting us know which are the most beneficial for us to consume at that time of year (not to mention the most affordable and eco-friendly!)



4. Fruits (2+ servings per day):

Anything with seeds is considered a fruit, so this includes cucumbers, tomatoes and avocados as well as mandarins and apples etc. Most fruits are a great source of Vitamin C and all fruits provide antioxidants and fibre. Whole fruits are more beneficial than fruit juices, and again it is recommended to consume what is in season in your country at the time.

Allergies

As mentioned previously, despite common misconception soy is not a necessary part of a vegan diet, so if you have a soy allergy you need not worry. Nowadays there are also a myriad of alternatives for vegans with wheat allergies or gluten intolerance. Products that were once only available in wheat varieties (such as bread, crackers and pasta) are now available wheat- and gluten-free. Nut allergies are usually isolated; few people are allergic to all nuts and seeds. Testing can determine which nuts and seeds are safe for you.

Advice for first timers

A common mistake when transitioning to a vegan diet is to eat too few calories, causing people to mistakenly think they "need meat" or "have to have *some* animal products". Healthful vegan diets are bigger on volume – your plate should be overflowing with fresh food, especially if you include lots of raw vegetables. Snacking is recommended throughout the day. It is hard to eat too many fruits and vegetables, nuts or seeds, and they make very healthy snacks between meals.

Although any dietary change may cause temporary bodily complaints, such as cravings, digestive discomfort or minor fatigue, these should not continue for a long period of time, and it is recommended to seek advice from a doctor to rule out coincidental health conditions if the symptoms go on for too long or become overwhelming.

NZ Vegan wishes you healthful, enjoyable & affordable eating!

Visit our website at [www.nzvegan.com](http://www.nzvegan.com)

Contact us: [info@nzvegan.com](mailto:info@nzvegan.com)

Disclaimer

*The information provided in this pamphlet is intended to be a guide only, and to give a helpful overview of a vegan diet. For expert advice please consult a professional nutritionist with expertise in vegan diets. Listen to your body and remember! there is always a vegan alternative – it is up to each of us to look for it! We hope this guide gives you the tools you need to get started today on the dietary aspect of veganism.*

*Special thanks to The Boston Vegan Society for their wonderful nutritional pamphlet, which was the primary guide used in the making of this nutritional pamphlet. Find it at: [www.bostonvegan.org/nutrition](http://www.bostonvegan.org/nutrition)*

NZ Vegan  
Nutritional Pamphlet



Eating Vegan in NZ

What is a vegan diet?

Veganism is nonviolence and a rejection of the exploitation of sentient beings, so the vegan diet reflects these values. Vegans consume an entirely plant-based diet\* (hereafter referred to as a vegan diet), and just as in all aspects of vegan living, the vegan diet does not include any products that are taken from any animals, such as: the flesh of any animal, *including* the fishes, crustaceans, squids, octopi and any other fresh water or sea-dwelling beings; animal milks or animal milk products such as cow's, goat's or sheep's milk cheeses, cow's milk ice cream or any other "dairy" products; no bird's eggs; nor honey; nor products containing any of the above; nor products containing any other animal by-products such as cow's hooves (gelatine) or feathers (often labelled as "L-cysteine" and often used to make commercial breads) etc.

This is not an exhaustive list, but if it seems like a lot to take in, never fear! Avoiding processed foods makes the avoidance of animal by-products easy, and is also much healthier way to eat. There are vegan processed foods, but like most processed foods they are less likely to be nutritionally sound and in NZ they can be rather expensive.



*\*Note – there are individuals who consume an entirely plant based diet for health reasons or environmental reasons or both, but who otherwise use or exploit animals or other animal products. Veganism is not a diet and they are not vegans, however a plant-based diet is obviously an essential part of veganism.*

Are vegan diets healthy?

Well-planned vegan diets are recognised as healthy and nutritious by the world's leading mainstream dietetic associations:



Dieticians of Canada/*Les diététistes du Canada* state: "A well planned vegan diet...is safe and healthy for pregnant and breastfeeding women, babies, children, teens and seniors." and "A vegan eating pattern has many potential health benefits. They include lower rates of obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer. Other benefits include lower blood cholesterol levels and a lower risk for gallstones and intestinal problems." and "A variety of plant foods eaten during the day can provide enough protein to promote and maintain good health."  
<http://www.dietitians.ca/Nutrition-Resources-A-Z/Fact-Sheet-Pages/HTML/Vegetarian/Eating-Guidelines-for-Vegans.aspx>



The American Dietetic Association, in its Position Paper on Vegetarian Diets, Volume 2009, states: "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...[and]...are appropriate for individuals during all stages of the life cycle, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, and adolescence, and for athletes."  
<http://www.eatright.org/about/content.aspx?id=8357>

Note the phrase "appropriately-planned" appearing in the expert analyses. This is important, because no diet that is poorly planned will meet anyone's nutritional needs, so someone can easily eat an unhealthy vegan diet i.e. only eating potato chips and applesauce, or only white bread and pasta. It is very important to eat a *balanced* vegan diet in order to get all the nutrients our bodies need.



**The following are some myths about a balanced vegan diet that we hope to address:**

How do I get my...

...Protein?

Plants have protein, so vegans get their protein from plant sources. It is a myth that humans need a large amount of protein, in fact it is now recognised that most people eat *too much* protein, or at least more than they need. By eating a variety of whole plant foods, humans can easily meet their daily protein needs. The recommended dietary allowance (or RDA) of protein for humans depends on physical activity levels, pregnancy and other factors, including age. For example, the NZ Ministry of Health Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Healthy Adolescents from 1998 states: "Peak requirements of protein will coincide with peak energy requirements and therefore can be summarised as 12–14 percent of energy requirements. Protein intake is recommended to be in the range of 0.8–1.6 g/kg body weight. The aim is to maintain protein intake at moderate levels (Department of Health 1991)."  
See: <http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/pagesmh/24>

*Did you know that some of the biggest animals in the world are "vegans"? Elephants; hippopotamuses; rhinoceroses; giraffes; gorillas, not to mention cows and horses. We never hear anyone asking if these animals lack protein!*

...Calcium?

Calcium is a mineral, and vegans get their calcium from plant sources (just like the cows do). Some of the richest sources of calcium are leafy green vegetables such as silverbeet, spinach, watercress, dark green lettuces, kale and broccoli; almonds and other nuts; sesame and other seeds; and beans.

There are foods that are fortified with calcium such as some tofu or soy milks, but they are not mandatory if one is consuming enough of a variety of the whole plant food sources mentioned above. General guidelines indicate we need about 1000mgs a day of calcium, which can easily be met with a balanced vegan diet.

*A fantastic way to eat leafy greens is in a Green Smoothie. The pureeing of the leaves helps our bodies to digest them quickly, which allows us to absorb the calcium and other nutrients more efficiently.*



...Iron?

One of the biggest myths is that "red meat" is the superior, or even the only, real source of iron. Proponents neglect to point out the detriment to our health that is caused by consuming any animal flesh—such as an increased risk of diseases like colon cancer and other cancers; diabetes; heart disease and stroke, and intestinal disorders such as constipation, to name a few—and we have all heard the warnings from even mainstream non-vegan sources about the dangers of "red meat". Here is how to get healthy and nonviolent sources of iron from your diet: Green leafy vegetables such as kale, cabbage and spinach; beans and lentils; pumpkin seeds; millet; and dried fruits such as apricots and dates. Iron is best absorbed with Vitamin C, especially when one is getting iron from purely plant sources, so be sure to eat plenty of fresh fruits alongside, to aid iron absorption and get the most out of these foods.



...Omega 3s?

Nowadays there is a lot of recognition of the importance of Omega 3 & Omega 6 fatty acids. Omega 6 can be obtained from vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains and seeds—good news for vegans, as this is essentially what a vegan diet is made up of.

Some vegan sources of Omega 3 include: Flaxseeds (linseeds)—a teaspoon freshly ground and sprinkled on cereal is a great way to supplement your daily needs—green leafy vegetables; grains; walnuts; spirulina and chia seeds. Oils made from linseeds, walnuts and hemp seeds are also good sources. In NZ chia seeds and walnut oil can be quite expensive and hemp seed oil is hard to find, but walnuts and linseed oil are quite commonplace in our supermarkets, as are linseeds, whole and ground, and of course green leafy vegetables and grains.

**For inspiring personal stories about the positive health benefits of eating a vegan diet please see:**

<http://gentleworld.org/rewarded-for-being-vegan/>