

**TITLE**

**A Vegetarian Diet: Is It Right for You?**

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**ABSTRACT**

Your doctor tells you to avoid eating meat, but is going completely vegetarian something you should do? Is it something you even want to do? Find out.

**BODY**

If you're considering becoming a vegetarian, you're in good company—more than 30 million Americans have investigated this eating alternative. [1A]

There are solid reasons for eating a diet low in fat and high in fiber and other key nutrients: research has shown that doing so helps prevent several diseases, including heart disease and cancer. [1B, 2A, and 2B] But if you're used to eating red meat, you may wonder if you'll like a vegetarian diet or whether the meals will be tasteless and boring. Not at all!

Consumer demand has transformed the world of vegetarianism; new products are being introduced all the time and are usually easy to find at your local grocery store. [1C and 1D] You've probably heard of veggie burgers—and maybe you've tried one. [1D] They've been around for awhile, but the increasing popularity of the vegetarian lifestyle has led food producers to create a variety of new and delicious selections. [1D]

From soy-based products to pre-cooked, easy-to-use food items such as “hot dogs,” “ground beef,” and “chicken” nuggets, there's a wide array of products available for you to try. [1C, 1E, 1F, 1G, and 2C]

Some people worry that they won't get enough protein on a vegetarian diet, but there's plenty of protein in soy-based foods, as well as in some other bean- and grain-based products. [1G] Soy products can be used in several delectable ways:

- Try adding soybeans to chili, pasta, or stir fry dishes. [2D]
- Steamed or lightly sautéed, soybeans are terrific on their own. [2D]
- Any recipe that calls for milk will benefit from soy milk. [2E] You can use soy milk on cereal, too. [2E] Also, try adding flavoring to soy milk for a great snack. [2E]
- When baking, soy flour can substitute for up to 20 percent of regular flour. [2F]

- You'll find "textured soy protein" in the frozen food section. [2C] It looks like browned ground beef, and it works beautifully in recipes like meatloaf, tacos, and chili. [2C]

Here are several other suggestions to help you investigate whether vegetarianism is right for you:

1. Allocate a little extra time at the grocery store so you can check out new products and read ingredient labels. [1H and 3A] Only by doing so can you discover whether something unexpected has been added—salt or fat, for instance. [3B] Understanding terminology helps you make smart decisions; for example, if an item is labeled "Reduced" or "Less," that means that it contains 25 percent less of whatever is referred to than does the regular version. [3B]
2. Stock up on fruit and vegetables for easy snacking at home. [1I] That way, when you want something to nibble on, there'll be something healthy ready to go.
3. Experiment with new recipes. [1J] As vegetarianism's popularity grows, so too does the availability of cookbooks and meatless recipes that are featured in the media. [1J]
4. Order a vegetarian meal at a restaurant. [1K] It's a great way to try new foods!

Eating a vegetarian diet can be healthy and delicious! Enjoy!

**Sources:**

- 1.) "Meat-Free' Goes Mainstream." American Dietetic Association Website. May 2003.
- 2.) "Heart-healthy eating." Mayo Clinic Website. January 2002.
- 3.) "Make Healthy Food Choices." American Heart Association Website. May 2003.