

Vegetarian Position Statement



Summary

- The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics has established that well planned vegetarian and vegan diets are safe and effective diet for all age groups, through all stages of life. (1)
- Peer reviewed, scientific studies have proven that adopting a vegetarian/plant-based diet can yield health benefits to include reduced incidence of cardiovascular disease, cancer and all cause mortality at the same time improving weight management and reducing BMI. (2)
- Vegetarian diets require careful planning of certain nutrients: Omega-3 fatty acids, iodine, Vitamin B12 & D and iron. The last three nutrients are particularly important for elderly vegetarians.
- Use vegetarian recipes from credible online sites such as: Registered Dietitians, Vegetarian Resource Group, American Cancer Society, Diabetes Association or the Red Cross.

Nutrients to Monitor

| Nutrient | Deficiency Signs | Adult Intake | Food Sources & Recipe Links |
|-----------|---|--|---|
| B-12 | Fatigue, slower cognition, nausea, low red blood cell count, anemia | 2.4 mcg daily | Vitamin B12 fortified cereal, breads, nutritional yeast, tofu & Plant based milk. Plant Based Registered Dietitian Recipes |
| Vitamin D | Muscle weakness, frequent illness, slow wound healing | 600 IU daily | Direct Sunlight is an ideal source of Vitamin D. Food sources are: mushrooms, fortified plant based milk & nutritional yeast. List of 30 Vegan Recipes |
| Iron | Fatigue, rapid heartbeat, hair loss, brittle fingernails, gastritis | 8 mg daily 18 - 27 mg daily (Women 19 - 50 y.o. or pregnant) | Black beans, chickpeas, spinach, iron fortified grains and bread products, cashews, tofu. American Red Cross Iron Rich Food and Recipe Guide: Includes Plant Based Options |

References

1. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. (2016). **Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Vegetarian diets.** *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 116(12), 1970-1980. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2016.09.025>
2. **Capodici, A., Mocciaro, G., Gori, D., Landry, M. J., Masini, A., Sanmarchi, F., Fiore, M., Coa, A. A., Castagna, G., Gardner, C. D., & Guaraldi, F. (2024).** Cardiovascular health and cancer risk associated with plant-based diets: An umbrella review. *PLOS ONE*, 19(5), e0300711. DOI: [10.1371/journal.pone.0300711](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0300711)
3. **Cashman, K. D., & Kiely, M. (2020).** Vitamin D deficiency 2.0: an update on the current status worldwide. *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics*, 33(2), 234-249. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jhn.12768>
4. **Office of Dietary Supplements. (n.d.).** *Vitamin D - Health professional fact sheet.* National Institutes of Health. Retrieved March 26, 2025, from <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/VitaminD-HealthProfessional/>