

How to Have a Nourishing Dairy-free or Vegan Diet

Who is this leaflet for?

Feeling unwell or having certain medical treatments may mean your appetite is smaller than usual. Some people find that even if their appetite is normal, the condition they have means they need more nourishment than usual to maintain their weight. In these cases, it is very important to meet your nutritional needs for good health and to prevent weight loss. Vegan diets (those with no animal products such as meat, milk, fish or eggs) are often lower in energy and higher in fibre and water, which may make maintaining or gaining weight more difficult.

This booklet provides advice on what to eat and drink if you follow a dairy-free or vegan diet, and are concerned about having a poor appetite, weight loss, or are experiencing difficulties with eating.

Why is good nutrition important?

Good nutrition means regularly consuming a variety of foods that provide sufficient energy, protein, fat, carbohydrate, vitamins, minerals, fluid, and fibre to meet your needs. Good nutrition is essential, especially during periods of illness, as it means you will be stronger, better able to fight infection, and cope with treatment.

Where do I start?

Foods high in calories help to increase your energy intake without adding extra bulk to your diet. Enriching your foods is a good way to increase the energy density of your meal. Having 3 small meals with regular snacks and nourishing fluids in between can also help you to meet your dietary needs, even if your appetite is smaller than usual.

How to enrich your food

Plant-based milks

The availability of dairy-free milks in supermarkets and local shops is increasing. These include soya, almond, oat, coconut, cashew, hazelnut, hemp and pea milks. They are all very different in taste and texture, so it is worth finding the one that suits you best; you may like oat milk in your coffee but prefer soya milk on your cereal.

- Aim to consume 500ml (1 pint) of plant-based milk each day. Choose 'original' or 'sweetened' plant-based milks fortified with calcium and vitamin D (*please note that organic versions are not fortified*).
 - Soya milk (original) 200ml = 88kcal, 6.6g protein
 - Oat milk (whole) 200ml = 114kcal, 2g protein
 - Almond milk (original) 200ml = 44kcal, 0.8g protein
 - Pea milk 200ml = 89kcal, 3g protein
- Use dairy-free milks to make milky drinks e.g. hot chocolate or soya latte.
- Choose vegan desserts after meals, for example coconut or soya-based yogurts, puddings, rice puddings etc. Visit the refrigerated 'free-from' area of your local supermarket to see the options available.
- Pour soya or oat cream on desserts or with fruit.
- Use custard powder made up with dairy-free milk, or ready-made soya custard to use as a dessert or as a sweet topping.
- Use dairy-free milk in sauces to use with meals or as an additional ingredient e.g. in white sauce, mashed potato or pasta.

Vegan 'cheese'

- Choose coconut, soya, or nut-based 'cheese' to add into meals e.g. soft 'cheese' stirred into mashed potato, grated 'cheese' on top of pizzas, vegetables, sauces, or soups.
- Vegan 'cheese' and biscuits make a good snack between meals.

Fats and dressings

- Use olive or vegetable oils generously in cooking, dressings, and drizzled over meals.
- Use olive or vegetable oil-based spreads generously on toast, in mashed potato, or melted over vegetables, potatoes, or pasta.
- Choose sauces such as vegan mayonnaise or ketchup to top meals or to dip chips or crackers .
- Use nut and seed butters to top toast, snack on, or in meals e.g. peanut butter on toast or porridge, tahini (sesame seeds paste) in sauces, and almond butter with fruit sticks as a snack.

Sugar

(N.B. if you have diabetes, please speak with your dietitian for advice on whether the following tips are appropriate for you)

- Stir additional sugar into drinks and desserts to taste.
- Top breakfast cereals or porridge with additional table sugar, maple syrup, jam, golden syrup, or agave nectar.
- Avoid artificial sweeteners and choose ordinary sugar products.
- Avoid 'sugar-free' options of squash or fizzy drinks.

Fruits and vegetables

Although fruits and vegetables are generally low in energy and protein, it is important to ensure you are getting all the vitamins and minerals you need

- Choose higher calorie fruits such as avocado, bananas, dates, and dried fruits.

- Add extra energy to these foods using dairy-free custard, cream, oils, and sugar e.g.
 - Additional oil in vegetable stir-fries.
 - Top chopped or stewed fruit with dairy-free cream, custard or sugar.
 - Use oil-based dressings on salads.
 - Add dairy-free cream, ice cream, yogurt, or cashew nuts to fruit smoothies.
 - Choose dried fruit and nuts as a snack between meals.

Alternative meat products

Vegan alternatives to meat are increasing in availability with a range of convenient plant-based meat alternatives available in supermarkets, for example..

- Vegan sausages, burgers, pulled jackfruit, kebabs.
- Flavoured or plain tofu or tempeh, marinade in an oil based sauce before cooking.

Snack and light meal ideas

Sandwiches filled with:

- Peanut butter
- Hummus
- Dairy-free 'cheese'
- Meat alternatives
- Vegan mayonnaise

Toast topped with:

- Baked beans
- Dairy-free 'cheese'
- Jam, marmalade, peanut butter, marmite, dairy free chocolate spread or avocado

Snacks:

- Dairy-free 'cheese' and crackers.
- Vegan cakes and biscuits.
- Mushroom, vegetable or bean soup topped with soya cream or soya yogurt, serve with bread and olive oil spread.

- Breakfast cereal topped with sugar or coconut yogurt.
- Soya ice cream.
- Soya, coconut, or almond yogurt.
- Cereal bars.
- Crisps or crackers with dip i.e. hummus, guacamole, or vegan cream 'cheese'.
- Packet of nuts with dried fruit.
- Dark chocolate (check ingredients list for milk-free).

Nutritional supplement drinks

Nutritional drinks can be useful to supplement your meals. There are now some vegan high energy, high protein shake-style drinks available over the counter. You may wish to enquire with your local health food shop to see if they stock any dairy-free or vegan shakes. For example

Huel powdered supplement

- 100g serving = 400kcal, 30g protein

Vitamin and minerals

You should ensure you are getting the following vitamin and minerals in your diet.

Vitamin B12

If you avoid all animal products, you will need to consider vitamin B12. To get sufficient amounts, eat fortified foods (e.g. plant based milks and cheeses or nutritional yeast) 2 or 3 times per day (totalling a minimum of 3 mcg), or take a B12 supplement (10mcg daily or at least 2000mcg weekly).

Vitamin D

Just like non-vegans, it is important to get adequate vitamin D. This is predominantly through skin exposure to sunlight (for short periods between 10am and 3pm in the UK summer) but be careful not to burn in the sun, take care to cover up or protect your skin with sunscreen before your skin starts to turn red or burn.

Take 10mcg of vitamin D daily through the winter (October to March) and all year round if you have darker skin or limited sun exposure in the summer.

Iodine

Iodine varies in plant foods based on the soil it is grown in. The best way to reach your recommended intake is to include a non-seaweed supplement of 140mcg daily.

Supplements

One easy way to include the vitamins and minerals described above is to take The Vegan Society's VEG1 supplement available online at www.vegansociety.com.

Calcium

If you avoid dairy, regularly include plenty of calcium rich plant foods in your diet. The best sources are fortified plant-milks and calcium-set tofu. Other sources include kale, pack choi, spring greens, dried figs, chia seeds and almonds.

Iron

As with non-vegans, you should include good sources of iron in your diet regularly. Plant-based sources include lentils, chickpeas, tofu, cashew nuts, chia seeds, pumpkin seeds, dried apricots, figs, raisins and quinoa.

You can improve the absorption of plant-based iron by including vitamin C with meals (lemon juice, peppers, kiwi and broccoli) and avoiding tea or coffee with meals.

Omega fatty acids

Include sources of omega 3 in your diet such as chia seeds, ground linseeds, walnuts and hemp seeds. For pregnancy and breastfeeding, supplementation with omega 3 from microalgae may be important; discuss this with your medical team.

For further information on a healthy vegan diet, visit www.vegansociety.com

Vegan milkshake recipes ideas

You may wish to make your own nutritional drinks by blending your favourite fruits with dairy free ice cream, dairy-free yogurt or nut butters. See below for 3 high calorie, high protein, vegan shakes using over-the-counter pea protein, these recipes make two shakes each.

Very Vanilla shake

Ingredients:

- 100g or 1 medium banana.
- 50g cashew nuts.
- 330ml vanilla soya milk (or regular soya milk with a drop of vanilla essence).
- 20g pea protein.

Per 250ml this milkshake provides **303kcal** and **18g** of protein.

Choco-nut shake

Ingredients:

- 100g or 1 medium banana
- 50g peanut butter
- 300ml soya milk
- 50g agave nectar
- 10g cocoa powder
- 20g pea protein

Per 250ml this milkshake provides **377kcal** and **18.6g** protein

Strawberry Ice shake

Ingredients:

- 100g or 1 medium banana
- 80g frozen strawberries
- 200g soya ice cream
- 50g coconut cream

- 250ml coconut milk
- 20g pea protein

Mix all ingredients in a blender and enjoy. The shakes can be stored in the fridge.

Per 250ml this milkshake provides 301kcal and 8.7g protein

If you are still struggling to maintain your weight, consult your dietitian for further advice.

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by RD&E staff undertaking procedures at the RD&E hospitals.

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