



## Being a healthy vegetarian or vegan

There are many health benefits for plant-based diets, even if it's just a few days per week. Increased meat consumption is linked to certain cancers (female, male, digestive...) and is a generally pro-inflammatory way of eating, so might be linked to any aches and pains you have.

Being a healthy veggie is wonderful when it's done right. There are a few nutrients primarily found in animal products that, when cut out, can lead to symptoms such as fatigue, brain fog, numbness or tingling, low immunity, muscle twitches or cramps, and overall feeling of blah.

**B12.** This vitamin is needed for red blood cell formation and neurological function. It's also a key cofactor for a whole bunch of biochemical reactions in the body including one that decreases a major cardiovascular disease marker.

- This is a big one as the best sources are animal-based. If you've kept eggs regularly in your diet, you're half-way there. Very, very difficult to get enough without a supplement in the form of a sublingual tablet or as injections depending on how low your levels are.

**Iron.** Used as the central portion of hemoglobin, this is needed for red blood cell formation and is generally lower in menstruating females and frequent blood donors.

- Iron is found in vegetarian sources such as dark leafy greens, but is in a form which isn't as well absorbed. Eating these with a high source of vitamin C (orange or red fruits and veggies) will help absorption, and away from calcium sources as these will hinder absorption. Have your levels checked and make sure the results are optimal for you.
- Supplementing with iron really requires a good form of iron, otherwise black stools and constipation result - which is a poorly-absorbed form of iron coming out your other end. Many good ones also combine vitamin B12 as well which means less pills!

**Zinc.** Immune function is the main focus here, though zinc is a co-factor for many different reactions.

- Pumpkin seeds are a great source of zinc as well as fortified foods. It's not a good idea to supplement with zinc long-term as it will throw off your copper balance and that's bad times. Short-term supplementing with zinc lozenges when a cold or flu hits is a great idea.

**Magnesium.** We need magnesium to make protein, have muscles and nerves function properly, and for about 300 other reactions in the body. High blood pressure, muscle spasms and charlie horses, and anxiety can be a result of not enough magnesium in the diet.

- Seaweed, pumpkin seeds, brown rice, and unprocessed (Dutch) cocoa powder are decent sources but quality will be a big factor. Being on the lower end of magnesium is pretty common due to soil depletion, so if you're prone to charlie horses and muscle cramps or spasms, supplementing is a good idea. Because this is a mineral, the form it's in matters when it's in a pill as some will absorb much better than others.

**Protein.** This one is pretty much a myth, but I do believe quality plays a big part here. And vary your diet! It's common for vegetarians/vegans to reach for soy, specifically TVP (textured vegetable protein; the basis for fake ground round), but these products can be very highly processed and are basically the McDonalds of the veggie world. Stick with organic soy only to avoid the genetically modified frankensoy and keep to about once a day.

- Make friends with: lentils, beans, peas, whole grains, seeds (quinoa, buckwheat, amaranth; snack-type seeds), nuts, organic soy.
- If you feel like you need a protein boost, a protein smoothie might be a good option for you.