



Get Real! Tackling Nutritional



Misconceptions about Plant-Based Diets

NUTRIENT	FUNCTION	SOURCE
PROTEIN	Essential for growth and repair and maintenance of good health.	<p>If you are not eating animal products, you can still get enough protein from plant-based foods to meet your body's needs. Eat a varied and balanced diet containing plenty of whole plant foods and adequate calories and ensure that most of your meals contain good sources of protein.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legumes eg beans, lentils, peas, soya • Starchy foods eg buckwheat, quinoa, wild rice • Nuts eg cashew, pistachio • Seeds eg pumpkin, linseed(flaxseed), chia, hemp • Meat alternatives eg Quorn™, seitan
OMEGA-3 FATS	Important for health, including heart health.	<p>FOODS: Fish oil is a good source of omega-3 fats. If you are not eating fish, include good sources of alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) in your daily diet, such as chia seeds, ground linseed, hemp seeds and walnuts, and use vegetable (rapeseed) oil for cooking. To meet ALA recommendations you would need to eat at least a tablespoon of chia seeds or ground linseed, or two tablespoons of hemp seeds, or six walnut halves/day. Fortified foods: These include bread and fat spreads (also some brands of eggs, milk, yoghurt if these are eaten)</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTS: Whilst the body can convert ALA into other omega-3 fats, including eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), the latter is limited. Vegans may wish to consider EPA and DHA supplements from microalgae during periods of development (eg pregnancy, breastfeeding and childhood).</p>
VITAMIN A	Needed for growth and development, eye health and the normal functioning of the immune systems.	<p>Foods can contain vitamin A or carotenoids. Our bodies turn carotenoids from plant foods into vitamin A. Plant sources include:</p> <p>FOODS: Eat a variety of fruit and vegetables. Vegans should include a really rich source of carotenoids in their daily diets, such as (orange) sweet potato, butternut squash, carrot or spinach. Dried apricots, kale, cantaloupe melon and spring greens are also good sources.</p> <p>FORTIFIED FOODS: Some fat spreads and margarines.</p>
VITAMIN B12	Helps to make red blood cells and a normal nervous system. Also helps keep the immune system healthy and reduce tiredness.	<p>Vitamin B12 isn't produced by plants. If you are not eating animal products you can get vitamin B12 from:</p> <p>FORTIFIED FOODS: Some plant-based drinks, yoghurts and fat spread, nutritional yeast flakes, yeast extracts and breakfast cereals. Eat these foods at least twice a day, aiming for at least 3mcg/day Supplements: Take either at least 10mcg/day or at least 2000mcg/week</p>
VITAMIN D	Helps the body to absorb calcium and keep bones strong. Also helps keep muscles and the immune system healthy.	<p>Often called 'The sunshine vitamin' as we can make it when our skin is exposed to sunlight.</p> <p>FOODS: There are a few dietary sources, eg UV-exposed mushrooms, (also eggs and oily fish if these are eaten)</p> <p>FORTIFIED FOODS: Margarine and some fat spreads, breakfast cereals, plant-based drinks (also some brands of yoghurt and milk if these are eaten).</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTS: Vitamin D supplements are recommended for everyone in the UK during autumn and winter, and some groups may benefit from supplements all year around. The recommended amount is 10mcg/day for children from the age of 1 year and adults. Some fortified foods and supplements contain animal-derived vitamin D3 from lanolin. Vitamin D3 from lichen and D2 are animal-free sources.</p>

NUTRIENT	FUNCTION	SOURCE
VITAMIN K	Involved in blood clotting and also bone health and kidney function	Plant-based sources include green vegetables eg Brussel sprouts, cabbage, kale, broccoli, spinach, spring greens, spring onions (also kiwi fruit). Aim for 'daily greens'.
CALCIUM	Helps keep bones and teeth strong and it is also involved in the nervous system, blood clotting and controlling muscles.	If you are not eating dairy foods, you can get all the calcium you need from plant-based sources. Calcium-set tofu, calcium-fortified plant-based drinks and yoghurt alternatives and soya and linseed bread fortified with extra calcium are particularly good sources. Other sources of calcium include kale, broccoli, pak choi, okra, spring greens, dried figs, chia seeds and almonds.
IODINE	Is used to make thyroid hormones, needed for many body processes including growth, regulating metabolism and for development of a baby's brain during pregnancy and early life.	FOODS: The richest sources of iodine are fish (especially white fish), shellfish, eggs, and milk and dairy products. Some plant-based drinks are fortified with iodine (check that this is as potassium iodide/iodate) and therefore provide a source for those not consuming cow's milk. Seaweed, particularly the brown seaweed kelp or kombu, is a concentrated source of iodine but can lead to excessive iodine. The iodine content of seaweed is highly variable and therefore is not reliable source of iodine. Eating brown seaweed more than once a week is not recommended, especially during pregnancy. If you are not eating rich sources of iodine, consider a suitable supplement. SUPPLEMENTS: Can help meet your iodine needs if you do not consume sufficient iodine-rich foods. The iodine in the supplement should be in the form of potassium iodide/iodate and should not exceed the daily adult requirement of 150 mcg. Do not use seaweed or kelp supplements as an iodine source.
IRON	Helps to make red blood cells. It also helps the immune system to work and the brain to function normally.	Many plant-based foods contain good amounts of iron. FOODS: Lentils, chickpeas, beans, tofu, cashew nuts, chia seeds, ground linseed, hemp seeds, pumpkin seeds, kale, dried apricots and figs, raisins and quinoa. FORTIFIED FOODS: Fortified breakfast cereal. Boost iron absorption by adding vitamin C sources to meals e.g. pepper, broccoli, kiwifruit, pineapple. Avoid drinking tea or coffee with meals as this can reduce iron absorption.
SELENIUM	Helps to protect the cells in our bodies against damage, keep the immune system, skin and nails healthy.	Plant-based foods contain variable amounts of selenium. Brazil nuts are a good source but the selenium content is variable and they should not be eaten daily (i.e. as if they were a supplement) to provide selenium. Cashew nuts and sunflower seeds also contain selenium. Alternatively, consider supplementation to guarantee a reliable intake.
ZINC	Contributes to normal mental function, healthy hair, skin and nails, fighting infection and growth.	There are many plant-based sources of zinc, including beans, chickpeas, lentils, tofu, walnuts, cashew nuts, chia seeds, ground linseed, hemp seeds, pumpkin seeds, wholemeal bread, quinoa, fermented soya products like miso and tempeh.



REFERENCES/FURTHER INFORMATION:

The Vegan Society vegansociety.com
The British Dietetic Association www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/home
The British Nutrition Foundation www.nutrition.org.uk/



March 2020