

Simple Steps to Plant-Based Eating



If you are interested in exploring a healthier way of eating while avoiding the health risks that can result from eating too much meat, dairy, and processed foods, then we suggest that you make the following foods the core of your diet:

- Raw and Cooked Vegetables
- Beans
- Seeds & Nuts
- Fruit
- Whole Grains

What are the health benefits of a plant-based diet?

- Lower cholesterol
- Lower blood pressure
- Improved blood sugar control
- Healthier weight
- Reversal or prevention of heart disease

Try these simple tips to create plant-based meals

Common concerns with plant-based diets are that they do not provide enough protein, iron, calcium, vitamin D and vitamin B12. But you can get enough of these nutrients by including certain foods in your diet:

- For breakfast, have whole grains such as oatmeal with fruit, nuts, and unsweetened soy or almond milk. Or use soy yogurt to create a yogurt parfait with granola, fruit and nuts.
- For lunch and dinner, start with a large salad (light on the dressing) as the core of your meal. Add fruit and nuts or seeds as a nutritious way to add flavor to your salad.
- Short on time? Try preparing a blended salad in advance by mixing greens and vegetables with fruit in a blender to make a delicious drink.
- Prepare steamed, stir-fried, or roasted vegetables and serve with a whole grain (brown rice, bulgur, quinoa) or a starchy vegetable (squash or sweet potato) for lunch or dinner. Have fruit for dessert.
- Have a cup of beans each day—in salads, soups, dips, etc. Make bean with vegetable soups and stews. Use dry beans or buy “no-salt added” canned beans.
- Eat a handful (1/4 cup) of nuts and seeds such as walnuts, almonds, pumpkin seeds, pecans, pistachios, sunflower seeds, filberts (hazelnuts), peanuts, cashews and macadamia nuts daily.
- Purchase chia seeds or ground flaxseeds. Combine 1 tablespoon in foods each day for a mercury-free source of omega-3 fatty acids.
- Drink water (plain, bottled, low-sodium, mineral), hot grain beverages (coffee substitutes), low-sodium vegetable juices, and non-medicinal herbal teas such as peppermint, rosehips or chamomile. Limit caffeinated beverages to one a day.

Foods to avoid

Stay away from added salt (salty snack foods, most canned products), sugar (in candy, fruit juices, sodas, sweetened cereals, desserts), added oils, deep fried foods, refined grains (white bread, pastries, bagels, pasta, most cold cereals), red meat, and full-fat dairy products.

Sample Menu

Breakfast:

- Oatmeal with cinnamon
- Soy milk
- Slivered almonds
- Fresh orange slices
- Water or tea

Lunch:

- Soy & nut burger on a whole wheat bun
- Green salad
- 1 tbsp fat free dressing
- Apple wedges with cinnamon

Dinner:

- Tacos (2 corn tortillas, seasoned tofu or potatoes, lettuce, tomatoes, salsa)
- Whole pinto beans
- Brown rice
- Watermelon

Snack:

- Cucumber, celery and carrot sticks
- Hummus dip
- Fruit

Do I need to take a supplement?

Take a multivitamin that contains vitamin B12. To get enough omega-3 fatty acid, take an algae-based DHA supplement.

Additional lifestyle considerations

After learning how to shop for, prepare and eat an ideal plant-based diet, consider the **90%/10% Plan**. Take in 90% of your calories from nutrient-dense plant foods and once or twice a week allow yourself a small portion of foods that are not part of the plant-based diet such as a piece of free range non-factory farmed poultry or fish. We suggest this as a way of reversing the standard American diet by eating 90% whole plant foods and only 10% processed food, meat, or dairy. This approach makes a plant-based diet sustainable so that the benefits of this healthy diet can be yours for a lifetime.

Recommendations for patients with coronary heart disease

If you have been diagnosed with coronary heart disease, or if you want to effectively maximize the prevention of coronary disease, we recommend not putting anything in your mouth that can injure your blood vessels. That means no animal flesh (not even fish), no dairy (not even fat free milk), no eggs, and only a rare and small amount of fats, nuts and seeds.

Are you ready to make a change?

On a scale of 0 to 10 (where 10 means you are really ready to make the necessary changes to your diet), honestly answer the following question:

How ready am I to make changes in my life so I can eat healthier?

1. If your answer is 3 or less, what would need to happen to make you more ready in the future?
2. If your answer is 4–6, what are the advantages of staying the same? What are the advantages of changing?
3. If your answer is 7–10, congratulations on your decision to make changes to eat healthier. Your commitment to small changes and healthy choices will help you be successful.

In summary

Eat plenty of vegetables (both raw and cooked), fruits, and beans as well as whole grains and a handful of nuts and seeds each day. To this base of plant foods, you may occasionally add fish and fat-free or lowfat dairy, and poultry and eggs once or twice a week or less. If you add red meat, sweets, full fat dairy (milk and cheese), and processed foods, do so only rarely.

Additional resources

- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for Health Information, programs, and other resources.
- For personalized vegetarian meal planning ask your personal physician or care manager for a nutrition referral with a Registered Dietitian.

Books

- *Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease* by Caldwell B. Esselstyn
- *The Engine 2 Diet* by Rip Esselstyn
- *The China Study* by T. Colin Campbell

Online resources

- For help with transitioning to a plant-based diet join the Physician Committee for Responsible Medicine's 21 Day Kickstart at 21daykickstart.org.
- For more recipes and cooking videos go to kaisersantarosa.org/recipes.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.