

“It is the position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics that appropriately planned vegetarian, including vegan, diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and may provide health benefits for the prevention and treatment of certain diseases.

These diets are appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, adolescence, older adulthood, and for athletes.”

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2016



Studies of older vegetarians, including vegans, indicate that their intakes of many minerals and vitamins are similar to or better than those of non-vegetarians. In addition, their body weight is more likely to be in the optimal range, and they're likely to live longer.

ZINC

Foods high in zinc include oats, wholegrain products, fortified breakfast cereals, cashews, beans, peas, lentils, fortified meat substitutes, soy foods, seeds and nut/seed butters. Pine nuts, pecans, wheatgerm, and fresh and sundried tomatoes are also good sources of zinc.

ANTIOXIDANTS

Vitamins A, C and E and selenium provide powerful protection against free radical damage. Antioxidants are linked to a reduced risk of heart disease, cataracts, macular degeneration, various forms of cancer, and even wrinkles. The high concentration of antioxidants in vegetables and fruits give vegetarians a considerable advantage. The vegetarian diet is very rich in vitamins A and C, and including some healthy fats, such as avocado, seeds, nuts, olives or olive oil ensures adequate vitamin E intake. Sufficient selenium can be assured by eating one to two brazil nuts every day.

OMEGA 3

Omega 3 is essential for joint and brain health, and can help reduce pain from arthritis. In particular, the ratio of omega 3:6 is important. Most diets are high in omega 6 so it's important to ensure plenty of omega 3, via freshly ground flaxseed (linseed), flaxseed oil, walnuts, pumpkin and chia seeds. Aim for two tablespoons ground flaxseed or one tablespoon flaxseed oil.

References:

David B, RD. and Melina V, MS, RD (2013) Becoming vegan.
Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Healthy Older People - Ministry of Health, NZ.



**FOR MORE INFO VISIT
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VEGETARIAN NUTRITION FOR THE ELDERLY

There are many vegetarians who have been vegetarian for a large proportion of their life, and quite a few that have been vegetarian their whole life. They are heading towards retirement age and are concerned about the food they will be provided with in rest homes or retirement villages.

With an aging population, more and more people want the security of a retirement village or rest home. We would like to provide information to help you with vegetarian residents.



First it's important to know there are different types of vegetarians and to determine what they can eat. A vegetarian is a person who, for whatever reason (ethical, health, religious, etc), does not eat meat (red meat, poultry, fish, shellfish) or by-products of slaughter (rennet, gelatine, meat stock, etc). But some vegetarians eat eggs and dairy products and some don't.

TYPE	EGGS*	DAIRY
Lacto-ovo vegetarian	Yes	Yes
Ovo vegetarian	Yes	No
Lacto vegetarian	No	Yes
Vegan	No	No

***Eggs:** Many vegetarians eat only free-range eggs. This is due to welfare objections to the intensive farming of hens.

It is not always completely obvious what is acceptable to a vegetarian or vegan. Some hidden ingredients to watch out for are gelatine (often in lollies or jellies), animal rennet in cheese, beef fat in pastries, biscuits, margarines, etc, chicken or beef stock in soups. Vegetarians and vegans avoid eating these products.

HOW WE CAN HELP

• Recipes & Meal Ideas

We can provide you with a range of recipes and suggestions that will meet the nutritional and ethical needs of seniors.

• Hidden Ingredients List

We can provide you with a comprehensive list of ingredients that vegetarians do not eat.

• Support

If the vegetarian residents need to talk to someone about their lifestyle they can call us. If they want to join in social events, we have many local groups throughout the country that organise social events.

NUTRITIONAL FACTS

As we age, we need fewer calories, but our requirement for certain nutrients, such as protein, calcium and vitamins D and B6 increase. This means that everything seniors eat needs to count. **Fortunately, the vegetarian diet is rich in minerals, vitamins and fibre while low in calories.**

TABLE OF NUTRITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR OVER 50'S

		PROTEIN	B12	B6	IRON	VITAMIN C	CALCIUM	VITAMIN D	ZINC
AGE GROUP		RDI g/day	RDI ug/day	RDI mg/day	RDI mg/day	RDI mg/day	RDI mg/day	RDI ug/day	RDI mg/day
Men	51-70 years	64	2.4	1.7	8	45	1000	10	14w
	>70 years	81	2.4	1.7	8	45	1000	15	14
Women	51-70 years	46	2.4	1.5	8	45	1300	10	8
	>70 years	57	2.4	1.5	8	45	1300	15	8

PROTEIN

Protein requirements for seniors are higher than those for younger people. Elderly people can reach that level by including high protein plant based foods such as legumes, quinoa, soy, meat alternatives, nuts and seeds in their diet. Adding protein powders based on soy, peas, pumpkin seeds or rice to smoothies can be a simple way to increase protein intake.

One advantage of the vegan diet is that plant protein, unlike animal protein, won't worsen the decline in kidney function that some seniors experience.

IRON & VITAMIN C

Seniors don't need more iron than younger people. The recommended intake for seniors is 8mg per day, a level that isn't difficult to reach as many plant foods are rich in iron. Also vegetarians have a higher vitamin C intake from fruits and vegetables which enhances absorption of iron.

Foods rich in iron also tend to be excellent sources of protein and zinc. These include soy foods, hummus, peas, lentils, beans, fortified breakfast cereals, meat substitutes and whole grains. Dried apricots, raisins, dark chocolate and blackstrap molasses are also good sources of iron.

VITAMIN B12

The ability to absorb vitamin B12 tends to decrease as we age due to a reduction in stomach acid and other factors.

The recommended daily intake of vitamin B12 for adults is 2.4mcg per day. The form of vitamin B12 in fortified foods is readily absorbed, even by those with diminished absorption. Small frequent amounts is better than larger irregular intakes. Ensure vegans have a daily intake via fortified plant milks and marmite.

VITAMIN B6

One vitamin that men need slightly more of as they age is vitamin B6. This vitamin, which is abundant in many fruits, is involved in amino acid metabolism and building haemoglobin. Good sources of vitamin B6 are fruits, avocado, fortified breakfast cereals, legumes, nutritional yeast, nuts, seeds, spinach and wholegrains.

CALCIUM, VITAMIN D & VITAMIN K

To maintain strong bones, we need a combination of nutrients – especially calcium, vitamin D, and protein – and we need more of these nutrients as we age. The recommended intake of calcium increases from 1000 to 1300 mg per day for women older than 50.

Good sources of calcium include calcium-fortified plant milks and orange juice, dairy products, blackstrap molasses and dark leafy vegetables.

Vitamin D, which is required for the absorption of calcium, plays a role in regulating bone mass. It also plays an essential role in immune function and dental health. In addition, low levels of vitamin D are linked with excess weight gain in women 65 and older.

At age 70, the recommended intake for vitamin D increases from 10mcg to 15mcg. As we age, vitamin D production in the skin, liver and kidney becomes less efficient. Dietary sources of vitamin D include vitamin D fortified milk and some cereals.

Vitamin K - found in leafy green vegetables is another key nutrient to help keep bones strong.

Weight bearing exercise is also very important for bone strength, so walking, gardening, resistance bands, etc, are valuable for seniors.