10 tips for vegetarians

**A vegetarian eating pattern can be a healthy option.** The key is to consume a variety of foods and the right amount of foods to meet your calorie and nutrient needs.

1. **think about protein**
   Your protein needs can easily be met by eating a variety of plant foods. Sources of protein for vegetarians include beans and peas, nuts, and soy products (such as tofu, tempeh). Lacto-ovo vegetarians also get protein from eggs and dairy foods.

2. **bone up on sources of calcium**
   Calcium is used for building bones and teeth. Some vegetarians consume dairy products, which are excellent sources of calcium. Other sources of calcium for vegetarians include calcium-fortified soymilk (soy beverage), tofu made with calcium sulfate, calcium-fortified breakfast cereals and orange juice, and some dark-green leafy vegetables (collard, turnip, and mustard greens; and bok choy).

3. **make simple changes**
   Many popular main dishes are or can be vegetarian—such as pasta primavera, pasta with marinara or pesto sauce, veggie pizza, vegetable lasagna, tofu-vegetable stir-fry, and bean burritos.

4. **enjoy a cookout**
   For barbecues, try veggie or soy burgers, soy hot dogs, marinated tofu or tempeh, and fruit kabobs. Grilled veggies are great, too!

5. **include beans and peas**
   Because of their high nutrient content, consuming beans and peas is recommended for everyone, vegetarians and non-vegetarians alike. Enjoy some vegetarian chili, three bean salad, or split pea soup. Make a hummus-filled pita sandwich.

6. **try different veggie versions**
   A variety of vegetarian products look—and may taste—like their non-vegetarian counterparts but are usually lower in saturated fat and contain no cholesterol. For breakfast, try soy-based sausage patties or links. For dinner, rather than hamburgers, try bean burgers or falafel (chickpea patties).

7. **make some small changes at restaurants**
   Most restaurants can make vegetarian modifications to menu items by substituting meatless sauces or non-meat items, such as tofu and beans for meat, and adding vegetables or pasta in place of meat. Ask about available vegetarian options.

8. **nuts make great snacks**
   Choose unsalted nuts as a snack and use them in salads or main dishes. Add almonds, walnuts, or pecans instead of cheese or meat to a green salad.

9. **get your vitamin B\textsubscript{12}**
   Vitamin B\textsubscript{12} is naturally found only in animal products. Vegetarians should choose fortified foods such as cereals or soy products, or take a vitamin B\textsubscript{12} supplement if they do not consume any animal products. Check the Nutrition Facts label for vitamin B\textsubscript{12} in fortified products.

10. **find a vegetarian pattern for you**
    Go to www.dietaryguidelines.gov and check appendices 8 and 9 of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010* for vegetarian adaptations of the USDA food patterns at 12 calorie levels.

Go to www.ChooseMyPlate.gov for more information.