

## The Healthy Vegan

Living as a healthy vegan is possible, but it takes considerable work and careful planning. Please approach the various websites and information that suggests otherwise, though often these websites have excellent recipes. There are many important things our bodies need that are difficult to obtain through plant sources. Primarily, these things are: protein, iron, vitamin B12 and fats. Without these in proper amounts, we may begin to feel sluggish and weak, and we may become more susceptible to infections, our digestion can become impaired, and our general health rests at a less-than-optimal state. Anyone subsisting on an exclusively vegan diet should carefully monitor themselves for signs of deficiency, and consistently consult with an appropriate healthcare provider.

The goal of putting together any meal plan is to ensure replete nutrition both in the short and long term. In putting together a vegan meal plan, the aim is to cover all the body's nutritional needs through specific and intentional combining of foods.

It is important to state that every person is an individual – some people adapt more easily to a vegan diet, while for others it isn't a sustainable option without the use of supplements. Discovering where you fit on this spectrum helps determine how to best live as a healthy vegan.

Below is a 3-week meal-plan designed to provide complete nutrition on a vegan diet. Many of these meals are taken exactly-as-served from various monasteries and meditation retreat centres – places where sustaining good health and clear minds on a meatless diet is a top priority.

Because many of the meals included here come from countries where meatless cooking is more common, you may find that some of the names or dishes are unfamiliar to you. Take the time to look things up and experiment with ingredients that are new to you. Often these new foods contain the nutrition we are aiming to include. It may seem like a lot of work in the beginning, and you may find you are spending more time cooking and preparing food than you're used to. This gets easier as you become familiar with the foods you're working with, and inevitably add your own twists and tastes. Please remember though: eating a balanced diet as a vegan does require more work and more planning to be done properly.

Start to get in the habit of adding nuts, seeds, and beans to most of your foods, and learn to listen to your body's needs and cravings. Watch-out for the temptation to fill a hunger-gap with low quality snacks like chips, french fries, bread, or chocolate. If you find yourself drawn to, or eating lots of these types of foods, it is time to re-assess your diet based on your body's individual needs. If you find you are gaining weight or having difficulty losing weight, this too is a sign it is time to reassess dietary needs.

It should also be noted that this meal plan is designed for reasonably healthy adults. *A vegan diet is generally inadvisable for children, adolescents, women who are or may become pregnant, athletes, people under significant stress, and anyone with a condition that may necessitate specialized nutritional needs.*

## Notes about the Meal Plan

### Substitutes

Many foods are similar, but every food offers a slightly different combination of nutrition. Optimizing this is exactly what we're trying to achieve in a vegan diet.

Although oats are a wonderful and nutritious food, substitute or combine some of the other cereal grains such as kamut, quinoa, buckwheat, or millet every so often.

### Nuts + Seeds

Mix up your nuts and seeds – try pumpkin seeds, sunflower, almonds, walnuts, hemp hearts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, anything! You may also find it helpful (and delicious) to use nut butters as well.

A few other notes before we get into lunches and dinners: you'll see in quite a few places the words “steamed greens” and “mixed oil dressings”. By these it is implied that it varies in order to optimize nutrition.

“**Steamed greens**” are Kale, Spinach, Red or Green Chard, Bok Choy, Beet Greens, Dandelion Greens, or any other leafy green vegetable. Ideally, mix and match, steam them well, and if you can, combine them with vinaigrette style dressing – this helps with absorption and digestion of calcium and other minerals.

Including “**mixed oil dressings**” aims to ensure our needs for healthy fats and oils is sufficient and balanced. This becomes especially important in a vegan diet, as sources and amounts of healthy fats and oils are difficult to achieve without consciously adding them to your foods. You'll want to experiment here to find combinations you enjoy, and make sure you mix it up. Oils to experiment with are: olive, sesame, sunflower, safflower, coconut (though it solidifies below about 20 degrees, try it in stir-frys), hemp, avocado, and a few others.

Try combining these with some vinaigrettes and spices, which will help with flavour and digestion, though you'll need to give it a good shake before serving. With the exception of coconut oil, all of the above oils are eaten raw, and should never be used in cooking. They can, and should be, added after the food is cooked and just before serving. For cooking, coconut oil (or peanut oil, though its health value is low) is best.

# Healthy Vegan Meal Plan

## Breakfast

The breakfast listed below will be the base breakfast for most days. Although it is good to start the day with a substantial meal, you don't need to (and probably can't) eat all of this every day. Try to rotate through the foods to include most of them over a period of a week or so. Don't get too rigid about it, just do what feels right, and check in every once and awhile to make sure you aren't missing anything. Take "a day off" at least every ten days, and have anything you like for breakfast. Get creative!

- Whole flake oatmeal with mixed nut and seed granola, or museli
- Organic, unsweetened soy, almond, rice or coconut milk
- Stewed apples, prunes, cinnamon, raisins
- Fresh fruit – grapefruit, oranges, peaches, mixed berries
- Avocado pieces and/or shredded coconut
- Almonds, cashews
- Tahini

## Lunch + Dinner

	Lunch	Dinner
<b>Day 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Squash and vegetable soup, thick and hearty</li> <li>- Green salad with mixed oil dressing and avocado</li> <li>- Roasted almonds, pecans, and walnuts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brown rice pasta with lima beans, kidney beans, sun-dried tomatoes and tomato sauce</li> <li>- Steamed greens with mixed oil dressing</li> <li>- Multigrain garlic bread</li> </ul>
<b>Day 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tomato and vegetable soup</li> <li>- Mixed greens salad with lemon and olive oil dressing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tofu and yam coconut curry with carrots and celery on jasmine rice</li> <li>- White bean and red cabbage coleslaw with olive oil and pepper</li> </ul>
<b>Day 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Udon noodle miso soup with tofu cubes, seaweed and shitake mushrooms</li> <li>- Fresh sprouts: mung, soy, sunflower</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Persian-spiced millet with roasted nuts, chickpeas, parsley, and raisings</li> <li>- Mixed greens salad with dressing</li> </ul>
<b>Day 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Squash and tomato soup with almonds and cranberries</li> <li>- Rye and rice crackers with nut butters</li> <li>- Mixed green salad with vinaigrette dressing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tortilla with brown rice, black bean and lima bean, and garlic oil</li> <li>- Guacamole, salsa</li> <li>- Steamed greens with mixed oil dressing</li> </ul>

<b>Day 5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Barley and mushroom soup</li> <li>- Walnut and apple bread</li> <li>- Mixed green salad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (vegan) Sang paneer, aloo gobi, chutney, and coconut milk, served with jasmine rice</li> <li>- steamed greens and mixed oil dressing</li> </ul>
<b>Day 6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quinoa and root-vegetable soup</li> <li>- Rye bread</li> <li>- Green salad and dressing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vietnamese Pho soup with tofu, sprouts, rice noodles</li> </ul>
<b>Day 7</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stewed kidney and white beans with sage</li> <li>- Cornbread</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hearty vegetable pizza</li> <li>- Green salad with mixed oil dressing</li> </ul>
<b>Day 8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Curried root-vegetable stew with toasted coconut and cashew</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Persian-spiced couscous with mint and cilantro, chickpeas, raisins, pistachios</li> <li>- Steamed greens and fresh sprouts with a creamy dressing</li> </ul>
<b>Day 9</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minestrone and vegetable soup</li> <li>- Rye bread and salad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Polenta pizza” – not really a pizza as you need a knife and fork to eat it, but polenta is used as the “crust” and then all the usual toppings are applied and baked in the oven</li> </ul>
<b>Day 10</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Miso soup with seaweed and chives</li> <li>- Steamed greens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “BBQ” tempeh and vegetables in a tamarind sauce served with jasmine rice</li> <li>- Mixed bean and red cabbage coleslaw</li> </ul>
<b>Day 11</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Squash curry soup</li> <li>- Crackers with nut butters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Calzones stuffed with mushrooms, onions, roasted garlic</li> <li>- Green salad with mixed dressing</li> </ul>
<b>Day 12</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vegetable medley soup with barley</li> <li>- Whole grain bread</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Spiced and fried tofu with rice noodles</li> <li>- Steamed broccoli and cauliflower</li> </ul>
<b>Day 13</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Spinach, fennel and leek soup</li> <li>- Rye bread</li> <li>- Green salad with mixed oil dressing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Black-bean enchiladas – brown rice, salsa, guacamole</li> <li>- Steamed greens with dressing</li> </ul>
<b>Day 14</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cinnamon baked yam and celery soup</li> <li>- Green salad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tamarind tofu slices with white rice</li> <li>- Steamed vegetables in an oil, yeast, garlic and Dijon sauce</li> </ul>
<b>Day 15</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vegan French onion soup</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thai sweet-and-sour tempeh with mixed vegetables on quinoa</li> <li>- Steamed bok-choy</li> </ul>

<b>Day 16</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Avocado and spiced tofu sandwiches with fresh sprouts</li> <li>- Cracker and nut butters</li> <li>- Green salad with vinaigrette</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Root-vegetable au-gratin</li> <li>- Steamed broccoli with mixed oil dressing</li> </ul>
<b>Day 17</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mushroom and barley soup</li> <li>- Crackers with nut butters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vegetable chili with corn bread</li> <li>- Spinach salad with walnut and cranberries</li> </ul>
<b>Day 18</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fresh sprouts salad with mixed oil dressing</li> <li>- Bread and crackers with nut butters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Indian paneer on jasmine rice (chickpeas, tofu, cauliflower)</li> </ul>
<b>Day 19</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Miso-soup with tofu and seaweed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vegetable and bean chili</li> <li>- Green salad with vinaigrette</li> <li>- Roasted root vegetables</li> </ul>
<b>Day 20</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Root-vegetable stew</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mixed-vegetable and tempeh stir-fry on rice noodles in sesame oil</li> </ul>
<b>Day 21</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mixed-vegetable penne</li> <li>- Green salad with mixed oil dressing</li> <li>- Focaccia bread</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thai green curry in coconut milk with snow-peas and chickpeas</li> <li>- Steamed greens in vinaigrette</li> </ul>

## Vegan Proteins

Below you'll find a table illustrating some common vegan protein sources. On average, each person needs about 0.3 grams of protein per day, per pound of body weight. To calculate this, divide you weight in pounds by 3, and this will give you roughly how many grams of protein you need in a day. As there are many different body types and protein requirements can vary considerably, please use this as a helpful guide, but trust the signs and signals of your body – such as fatigue, lethargy, and prolonged infection times – as a more appropriate measure of protein status.

### Protein Content of Selected Vegan Foods

Source	Portion	Grams of protein
Beans, baked, canned, plain	1 cup	12.07
Beans, red kidney	1 cup	13.47
Beans, navy	1 cup	14.98
Beans, pinto	1 cup	15.41
Beans, white	1 cup	19.02
Beans, refried	1 cup	13.83
Brussel sprouts	8 sprouts	8g
Chia seeds	2 tbsp	4
Green peas	1 cup	7.51
Hemp seeds	3 tbsp	10
Hummus	4 tbsp INCREASED PORTION	4.44
Lentils	1 cup	17.86
Lima beans	1 cup	14.66
Nuts, cashews	1 oz (approx. 18 nuts)	4.34
Nuts, almonds	1 oz (approx. 24 nuts)	6.02
Nuts, mixed	1 oz	4.90
Nuts, walnuts	1 oz (approx. 15 halves)	4.32
Nut butter, peanut	1 tbsp	4
Nut butter, almond	1 tbsp	3
Oat bran, raw	1 cup	16.26
Portobello mushrooms, cooked	1 cup	5
Pumpkin and squash kernel seeds	1 oz	9.35
Quinoa	1 cup cooked 1/3 cup uncooked	8
Rice, brown, cooked, long-grain	1 cup	5.03
Sunflower seeds, dry roasted	1 oz (approx. 1/4 cup)	5.48
Soybeans, cooked	1 cup	28.62
Soymilk, original and vanilla, unfortified	1 cup	8.01
Seitan	3 oz	31
Tahini (sesame seed butter)	1 tbsp	2.55
Tempeh	1 cup	41
Tofu, firm, prepared	1/4 block	6.63