



# SUSTAINABLE AND PLANT BASED DIETS

## WHAT ARE PLANT BASED DIETS?

A diet which contains mainly plants! A balanced and varied diet which includes wholegrains, pulses, nuts, seeds, fruits and vegetable, should form the basis of all diets, whether you include animal products or not!

## FLEXITARIAN, VEGETARIAN, VEGAN DIETS

These are all types of diets which **reduce or avoid** the consumption of **animal based products**, such as meat, poultry, fish, dairy products and eggs due to environmental and ethical concerns regarding **animal welfare**.

## WHAT ARE SUSTAINABLE DIETS?

Diets which are high in animal products have a greater **impact on the environment** in terms of resources and greenhouse gas emissions. Diets which contain **less processed foods**, more seasonal fruits and vegetables and **less animal products** come under the definition of 'sustainable diets'.

"Sustainable Diets are those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations."

Environmentally sustainable diets are a win-win for the planet and your health too

Source: Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)



### VEGETARIAN DIET

A vegetarian diet excludes all meat and fish, but can include **dairy products and eggs**.



### FLEXITARIAN DIET

A flexitarian diet may include small quantities of **meat, chicken or fish**, but only in very limited quantities such as weekly or monthly consumption.



### VEGAN DIET

A vegan diet excludes all animal products and products derived from animals, such as meat, fish, eggs, dairy products and honey.



## DEFINE YOUR OWN DIET!

The goal is to find a diet which suits **you**! You can be a vegetarian who likes to eat fish, or a vegan who includes eggs in their diet! A balanced and varied diet which meets your nutritional requirements and preferences will be a **healthy** one!

# IF YOU ARE AVOIDING OR MINIMISING YOUR CONSUMPTION OF ANIMAL-DERIVED FOODS THERE ARE A FEW NUTRIENTS THAT YOU MIGHT NEED TO PAY ATTENTION TO:

## PROTEIN

Animal products are a rich source of protein, an essential nutrient for growth and repair and the maintenance of good health. Vegetable sources of protein include beans, lentils and tofu while cereals, nuts and seeds also contribute to protein in the diet.

### Incomplete v complete proteins

Protein is made up of chains of units, known as amino acids. There are 20 amino acids and 8 of them are essential (which means that we have to obtain them from our diet). Animal protein contains all these 8 amino acids, so they are known as 'complete' proteins. Plant proteins are either missing one or more of these essential amino acids, or do not contain them in sufficient amounts, so they are known as 'incomplete proteins'.

You can though, obtain all the amino acids you need by combining different plant proteins.

For example, rice and beans together contain all the amino acids you need.

### Lentil curry + brown rice = complete protein!

Don't worry about having to combine foods at each meal! Vegetarians and vegans should ensure that they consume a variety of different vegetable proteins throughout the day to ensure they meet their protein requirements.

## IRON

Our bodies need iron to make haemoglobin, a protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen from the lungs to all parts of the body, and myoglobin, a protein that provides oxygen to muscles. Iron deficiency is particularly common in women of menstruating age so it is important to eat a diet which provides sufficient iron.

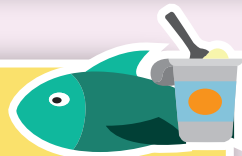
There are two types of iron. 'Heme iron', which is found only in animal products: meat, poultry, and fish and 'Non-heme iron' found in plant and animal products such as leafy greens, beans, fortified cereals, egg yolks, tofu, and dried fruits which is less readily absorbed by the body. The good news is that consuming vitamin C with iron rich foods improves the absorption of iron. Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables rich in vitamin C e.g. citrus fruits, strawberries, green leafy vegetables and peppers, with your meals will help to optimise iron absorption!

## CALCIUM



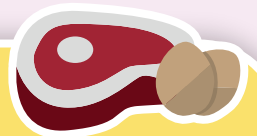
Calcium is an essential nutrient for bone health. An adult requires approximately 700mg per day. Dairy foods are rich in calcium and public health guidelines recommend 2-3 servings of dairy products a day as this ensures you meet your calcium requirements. If you are not eating dairy products make sure you obtain calcium from other sources like fortified plant-based dairy alternatives, dried fruit e.g. figs, nuts such as almonds, leafy green vegetables, red kidney beans, sesame seeds, tahini and tofu.

## IODINE



The major sources of iodine in our diet are dairy products and fish. The iodine content of plant foods depends on the iodine content of the soil which is variable. Foods grown closer to the ocean tend to be higher in iodine. Seaweed is the best vegetable source of iodine and there are variable amounts in some vegetables.

## B12



B12 keeps your body's blood and nerve cells healthy and helps make DNA, the genetic material in all of your cells. This micronutrient is mainly found in animal products. While a flexitarian or vegetarian diet which contains dairy products and eggs should provide sufficient B12, if you are eliminating all animal derived foods, the only reliable sources of vitamin B12 are fortified foods and supplements.