

View this article online at: patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-snack-healthily-when-you-are-vegan

How to snack healthily when you are vegan

An increasing number of people are turning away from meat and dairy to follow a plant-based diet. Supermarkets offer a wide range of vegan substitutes, such as oat and almond milks, soya-based meat substitutes and more. However, navigating a vegan diet can be tricky – particularly if you're new to an entirely plant-based lifestyle.

How to stay healthy as a vegan

[Veganism](#) is becoming increasingly popular. In 2019, [The Vegan Society](#) registered more than 14,000 products with the Vegan trademark, double the number of products registered the previous year.

A vegan diet contains only plants, such as [vegetables](#), grains, nuts and fruits and foods made from plants. From healthy gut function to reducing the risks posed by consuming [too much red or processed meat](#), there are many [health benefits associated with a vegan diet](#).

However, staying healthy while on a vegan [diet](#) requires planning and an understanding of the [vitamins](#) and nutrients your body needs. If you do not plan your [diet](#) properly, you could miss out on essential nutrients. This is particularly important for people who are [pregnant](#) or [breastfeeding](#).

"The most common [nutritional](#) deficiencies for vegans are B vitamins, iron, calcium and zinc," says dietitian Sophie Medlin, founder of [City Dietitians](#). "We don't have reliable data on how common these deficiencies are at present but we see more and more of them in clinical practice."

Vegan sources of calcium, vitamin D and zinc

Calcium is needed to maintain healthy [bones](#) and [teeth](#). Although non-vegans get most of their calcium from [dairy](#) products, it's possible to get it from other sources. This includes green, leafy vegetables such as broccoli and cabbage, fortified unsweetened soya (including calcium-set tofu), rice and oat drinks, pulses and dried fruit. Calcium is also added to brown and white bread in the UK.

Good sources of [vitamin D](#) for vegans include sunlight exposure, fortified cereals, spreads and soya drinks. [Vitamin D supplements](#) are also recommended for everyone in the winter months, when sunlight is scarce. Sources of [zinc](#) include beans, chickpeas, lentils, tofu, walnuts, cashew nuts, pumpkin seeds, wholemeal bread and quinoa.

Vegan sources of iron, vitamin B12 and omega-3 fatty acids

Iron helps the body create red blood cells, which carry oxygen around the body. A lack of iron can lead to iron-deficiency [anaemia](#). Pulses, wholemeal bread, breakfast cereals fortified with iron, dark green, leafy vegetables and nuts are all [vegan](#)-friendly sources of iron.

The body needs [vitamin B12](#) for a healthy nervous system. [Meat](#), fish and dairy are sources of vitamin B12, but vegans can get some from fortified breakfast cereals and soya drinks. A vitamin B12 supplement may be needed.

Omega-3 fatty acids can reduce the risk of [heart disease](#) and can be found in flaxseed (linseed) oil, rapeseed oil, soya oil and soya-based foods, such as tofu. Walnuts are also a good source too.

How to snack healthily as a vegan

"Great snacks contain a portion of fruit or vegetable and a [protein](#) source. This helps to balance your blood sugars while providing helpful nutrients," says Medlin.

"Healthy [vegan](#) snacks include carrot sticks and hummus, apple and peanut butter or nut protein bars with a high nut content. Other good snacks include a piece of [fruit](#), a handful of almonds and two clementines or a vegan protein yoghurt and berries."

Savoury vegan snacks

Vegan dips with raw vegetables, crackers or rice cakes are also a good, filling snack. Dips include guacamole, made with [avocado](#), and hummus, which is made by blending chickpeas.

Stuffed pitta breads also make a good snack or [lunch](#). Fill with hummus or another vegan dip, and salad; drizzle with olive oil and enjoy.

Nut mixes

For an easy, on-the-go snack, try creating a trail mix by mixing together popcorn, raisins and almonds - or any other preferred nuts - and store in an airtight container.

Roasting chickpeas in olive oil with spices and herbs, such as curry powder or paprika, also creates a delicious savory [snack](#) and an alternative to crisps.

Sweet vegan snacks

If you fancy something sweeter, dates are naturally sweet. You could also try making vegan banana bread by mixing four ripe mashed [bananas](#), 200 g self-raising flour, 25 g ground almonds, 75 g light brown sugar, four chopped dates, three tablespoons of soya milk, one teaspoon of baking powder and 75 g of toasted walnut pieces to form a batter. Bake in the oven using coconut oil in the tin to stop the cake sticking.

Dark [chocolate](#) peanut butter cups are surprisingly easy to make. You'll need 100 g of walnuts, 100 g dairy-free dark chocolate (at least 70% cocoa solids) and one chopped medjool date. Roast the walnuts in the oven and blend into a paste using a food processor. Melt the chocolate and pour into small, paper cases and allow to cool in the fridge. Fill with the nut paste and add some pieces of the chopped dates.

Disclaimer: This article is for information only and should not be used for the diagnosis or treatment of medical conditions. Egton Medical Information Systems Limited has used all reasonable care in compiling the information but makes no warranty as to its accuracy. Consult a doctor or other healthcare professional for diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions. For details see our [conditions](#).

Last updated by: Lydia Smith 10/12/2021	
Peer reviewed by: Dr Sarah Jarvis MBE, FRCGP 10/12/2021	

View this article online at: patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-snack-healthily-when-you-are-vegan

Discuss How to snack healthily when you are vegan and find more trusted resources at [Patient](#).



To find out more visit www.patientaccess.com
or download the app



Follow us

