A Healthy Diet for a Healthy Vegetarian

Many people choose to follow a vegetarian diet for a variety of different reasons. Regardless of your reason, it’s important to be aware of the potential benefits and risks of eliminating meat from your diet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Risks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased fruit and vegetable intake</td>
<td>Nutrient deficiencies possible</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decreased saturated fat intake possible</td>
<td>May lead to unhealthy weight loss</td>
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<td>More plant-based protein sources</td>
<td>Can be difficult to manage at social events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benefits to the environment</td>
<td>May develop into excessive dietary restrictions</td>
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<td>Decreased food cost possible</td>
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Eating a variety of foods will help you meet the recommended daily intake for vitamins and minerals. However, following a vegetarian diet can require attention to ensure that you are getting all of the nutrients your body needs. Some common nutrients that may need extra attention in a vegetarian diet include:

A. Iron: a diet lacking this mineral can result in heart problems, anemia, and fatigue
   • Look for iron in pumpkin seeds, broccoli, spinach, and fortified cereals and grains.
   • Cooking in a cast iron skillet will increase iron content of any food.
   • For maximum absorption, couple iron sources with a vitamin C rich food (orange juice, broccoli, or kiwi fruit).

B. B-12: a diet lacking this vitamin can cause weakness, anemia, pale skin, and diarrhea
   • B-12 is found in eggs, milk, soy milk, fortified cereals, and cheese. Many vegetarians need to supplement with B-12 injections, especially vegans.

C. Calcium: an important mineral in bone health, blood clotting, and nerve health
   • Good sources of calcium include all dairy, broccoli, spinach, almonds, hummus, and fortified juices and cereals.

D. Protein: a deficiency in this macronutrient can cause fatigue, brittle hair and nails, muscle loss/weakness
   • Vegetarian sources of protein include eggs, milk, yogurt, nuts, legumes, quinoa, cheese, tofu, and tempeh.

With careful monitoring of your diet, vegetarianism can be a healthy choice for you!

Please call (512) 475-8252 for more information.

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