

Plant-Powered Nutrition Guide



What is Plant-Based Nutrition?

Plant-Based Nutrition focuses on foods from plant sources and avoids foods that come from animals. Some examples of plant-based foods are fruits, vegetables, beans, other legumes, and whole grains. Plant-based foods are rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Some examples of animal-based foods are meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy.

Different Types of Plant-Based Diets



There are different types of plant-based diets that people follow. People may choose these diets for health reasons, religious beliefs, environmental reasons, or animal rights. In all plant-based diets, poultry, red meats, and seafood are avoided. Here is a list of different plant-based diets:



- Vegetarian diets focus on plant-based foods and may include animal by-products such as eggs and dairy.
 - Lacto-vegetarian diets include dairy.
 - Ovo-vegetarian diets include eggs.
 - Lacto-ovo-vegetarian diets include eggs and dairy.
 - Pescatarian diets include fish and seafood.
- Vegan diets only include foods that are plant-based.
 - Raw vegan diets only include raw plant-based foods (75-100% of the time).
- Flexitarian diets include plant-based foods most of the time. This diet occasionally has meat, fish, eggs, and dairy.
- A Whole Food Plant-Based Diet is a plant-based diet that only includes foods in their original state. This means that the foods are not altered. They are whole and unprocessed.



If you are new to plant-based diets, starting out as a flexitarian is a good option. Try it out by slowly replacing animal-based proteins with plant-based options a few times a week.

Building a Balanced Plate



- One half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of your plate should be vegetables, focusing on non-starchy vegetables (broccoli, carrots, cucumber, mushroom, etc.)
- One quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$) of your plate should be plant-based proteins (beans, lentils, tofu, etc.)
- One quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$) of your plate should be whole grains (whole-wheat bread, brown rice, etc.) or starchy vegetables.

Serving Sizes

As with any diet, it is important to know what serving sizes are correct for the foods you are eating. Here are the serving sizes for common plant-based foods:

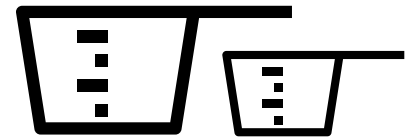
Fruit = 1 cup fresh, canned, or frozen, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dried fruit

Vegetables = $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked, or 1 cup raw vegetables

Whole grains = $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked rice or pasta, 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of cereal

Plant proteins = $\frac{1}{2}$ cup tofu, cooked beans, peas, or lentils

Nuts = $\frac{1}{4}$ cup nuts or 2 Tbsp nut butter



It is important to remember that just because a food is plant-based it does not always mean that it is healthy.

Be sure to read the nutrition label when buying foods.

Check the sodium, carbohydrate, and fat content in the food.

Important Nutrients

If you are new to a plant-based diet, giving up animal-based food means you need to get some nutrients in a different way. These nutrients are higher in animal-based foods than in plant-based foods. Pay close attention to be sure you are getting enough of these nutrients:

- Protein
- Omega-3 Fatty Acids
- Iron
- Zinc
- Iodine
- Calcium
- Vitamin D
- Vitamin B12

You may also see the word “fortified” in the foods listed below. Fortified means that these nutrients are added to foods that do not normally have any or enough of the nutrient.



Important Nutrients Explained

Protein

Protein is a macronutrient that is essential in our diet. Protein supports the daily functions of the muscles and the immune system. Proteins are made up of compounds called amino acids. Complete proteins contain all amino acids that the body cannot make on its own. Plant proteins are not complete proteins. Be sure to eat a variety of plant-based foods to get all essential amino acids. Plant-Based Proteins include:

- Soy (Tempeh, Tofu, Edamame)
- Beans
- Lentils
- Nuts and seeds
- Plant-based meat alternatives
- Whole grains



Omega-3 Fatty Acids

Omega-3 fatty acids are important for heart health, brain development, and more. Fish and seafood are a good source of this nutrient but they are usually avoided in a plant-based diet. Omega 3 fatty acids can be found in nuts, seeds, canola, and soybean oil.



Iron

Iron is a mineral needed for functions like transporting oxygen to all parts of the body. It is usually found in both animal and plant foods. In a plant-based diet, iron can be found in some green leafy vegetables like spinach and swiss chard. It's also found in oatmeal, rice, fortified cereals, nuts (pistachios, almonds), beans, lentils, dried fruit, and more. It is harder for the body to absorb plant-based iron than it is to absorb the iron that comes from animals. Foods high in vitamin C like oranges can help increase iron absorption in the body. Pair foods high in iron with foods high in vitamin C to increase absorption. For example, have oatmeal with oranges and nuts for breakfast.



Zinc

Zinc is an essential mineral for body functions like the immune system. In a plant-based diet, zinc can be found in soy products, beans, grains, nuts, and seeds. Similar to iron, the body has a harder time absorbing zinc from plant foods compared to animal sources. Methods like sprouting, heating, and soaking plant foods can help the body absorb zinc.

Iodine

Iodine is a mineral that is essential for thyroid function. It is typically found in fish, seafood, and dairy products. In a plant-based diet, it can be found in iodized salt and seaweed.

Calcium

Calcium is a mineral that is important for our bones. Dairy is the main source of calcium. Calcium can also be found in plant-based items like fortified plant-based milk and cereals, tofu, leafy greens (kale, turnip, bok choy), almonds, and beans.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is a nutrient that promotes bone health and regulates calcium levels in the body. Fortified dairy products and regular exposure to sunlight provide Vitamin D. In a plant-based diet, it can be found in fortified products such as plant-based milks, orange juice, and cereals.



Vitamin B12

Vitamin B12 is naturally found in animal-based foods but not in most plant foods. Therefore, Vitamin B12 can be hard to find in a plant-based diet. Sources of vitamin B12 are fortified foods such as cereals or meat substitutes. Eggs and dairy are also good sources of B12. If you are a vegetarian, you can add eggs and dairy to your diet to decrease the risk of low vitamin B12 levels. If you choose to eat a vegan diet, talk to your doctor about taking a vitamin B12 supplement.



All of these nutrients can come from a well-balanced plant-based diet. It is important to eat a variety of foods to get all the nutrients your body needs. Try different foods and flavors to see what works best for you!

How to Prepare Plant-Based Proteins

Tofu

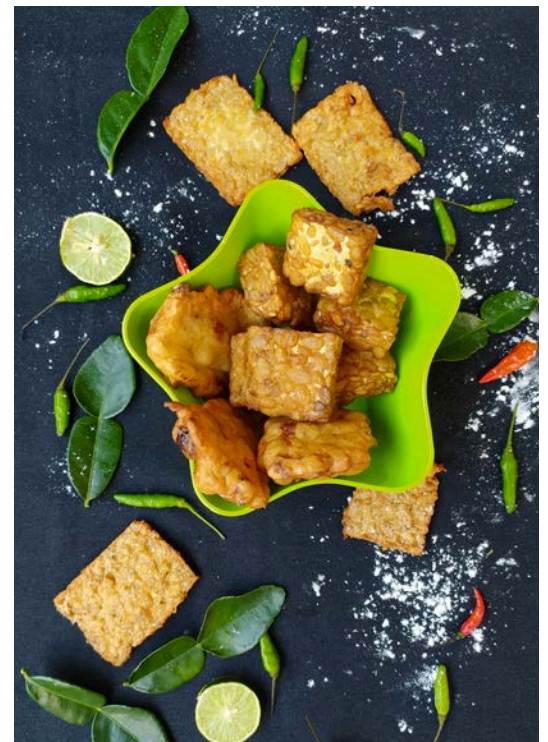
Tofu is a soy product that can be used in place of meat in most recipes due to its versatile texture. Tofu comes in soft and firm varieties. Tofu can be eaten as is or with a sauce for a quick and easy meal. It can be baked, stir-fried, roasted, and more. It can be added to soups, stir-fries, salads, smoothies, and more.

For a crispy texture, you can press the tofu. This process helps remove liquid from the tofu allowing it to absorb flavor from seasonings or marinades. Press tofu by placing it on a flat plate or sheet pan. Cover it with a kitchen towel then add another pan or plate on top of it. Then stack heavy items such as textbooks or a heavy pot on top of that for at least 30 minutes. The tofu can then be chopped, crumbled, marinated in any sauce of your choice, baked, sautéed, or air-fried.

Tempeh

Tempeh is a fermented soy product that has a firmer, denser texture compared to tofu. It is a good source of protein and can be easier to digest than tofu as it is fermented.

Tempeh can be steamed, baked, air-fried, roasted, grilled, and more.





Beans

There are so many varieties of beans so choose the ones that you like best! Examples of beans are chickpeas, kidney beans, pinto beans, northern beans, cannellini beans, and black beans.

The best way to cook dried beans from scratch is to soak them overnight in water and then simmer on low heat or cook in a pressure cooker. Soak one cup of dried beans overnight in 4 cups of water. The next day, rinse the beans, add enough water to cover them, and cook on low heat. You can also use a pressure cooker to cook your beans until tender.

Cooking with dried beans that have been soaked can help save money as they are less expensive to buy than canned beans. You can cook a larger amount of beans in this way which can then be frozen in batches and eaten later. Lastly, by preparing the beans yourself, you have control over exactly what is added to them.

For convenience, canned beans can be used. Be sure to look for low-sodium or no salt added options and always rinse and drain the beans before using. Use these beans in chili, curry, or as a topping for salad, and more.



Lentils

Lentils are edible seeds, prepared much like beans. They come in many different varieties and colors. You can add lentils to stir-fries, soups, curry, and salads, among other things.

To reduce the cooking time you can soak lentils in hot water for 15 minutes. Cook them in a pan at low heat with 3 to 4 cups of water per one cup of dry lentils. Add 1/4 teaspoon of oil to prevent it from bubbling over.



Nuts and Seeds

Nuts and seeds are sources of protein, healthy fats (such as Omega 3s) and other essential nutrients needed in a plant-based diet. Nuts include almonds, cashews, pistachios, walnuts, chestnuts, peanuts, and more. Nuts can easily be added into the diet in the form of nut butter. For example, you can add peanut butter or almond butter to oatmeal, or eat as a snack with an apple. Certain nuts can also be used to create plant-based milk such as almond or cashew milk.

Seeds include chia seeds, flaxseeds, sunflower seeds, and pumpkin seeds, to name a few. Seeds can be incorporated into the diet by simply snacking on them, adding them for a nice crunch to oatmeal, salads, and soups, or using them to make sauces, dips, and spreads.





Plant-Based Meat Alternatives

Plant-based meat alternatives are foods created to imitate the flavor and texture of meat. These products may be made from soy products, jackfruit, vegetables, peas, or other plant foods. Some examples of these are Beyond Meat or Impossible Meat products. You can try these alternative meats when transitioning to a plant-based diet as these products have similar textures and flavors to meat. It is important to look at nutrition labels when purchasing these products as they may contain more sodium to enhance the shelf life and flavors of the food. Choose products that are not too processed such as tofu.

Whole Grains

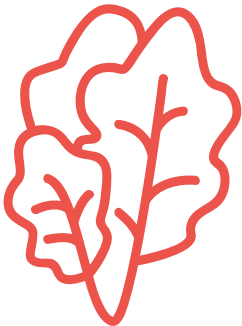
Whole grains that can be included in a plant-based diet include seitan (wheat gluten), brown rice, quinoa, oatmeal, popcorn, whole wheat breads, tortillas, and whole wheat pasta. Whole grains are a source of fiber along with fruits and vegetables. They can help you feel full for longer and have many essential vitamins and minerals. They can be used as a base for a hearty meal or enjoyed as a snack. Seitan (wheat gluten) has a similar texture to meat and is a good substitute that can be used as a base in meat-alternative products. It can be seasoned and cooked in the same way you would prepare and cook meat.

Tips for Getting Started

Do you want to explore increasing your intake of plant-based foods but are feeling overwhelmed on where to start? Here are some easy tips to get started:



1. Eat more plant-based foods that you already enjoy such as fruits, vegetables, or oatmeal.



2. Focus on slowly moving towards a plant-based diet. You do not have to give up your favorite animal-based foods immediately.

- Start by eating smaller portions of meat with more vegetables.
- Start by swapping an animal-based meal to a plant-based meal for one meal a week.



3. Explore grocery stores for options that work for you.

4. Fill your pantry with plant-based food and meal ingredients.



5. Find plant-based recipes for meals you enjoy and collect them so they are ready when it is time to cook.



6. Prepare fresh produce by pre-cutting it or consider purchasing frozen or canned vegetables to help save time during cooking.

Creating a Plan

Planning out weekly meals can help with grocery shopping and make sure that you are getting a variety of foods in a plant-based diet. Planning can also help when moving to a plant-based diet as you can create a meal plan with your favorite meals and make at least one plant-based meal a week.

Once the meals have been planned, you can write down the ingredients you need for the week and create a grocery list. Before shopping check your fridge and pantry to see what items you already have. Bring this list with you when shopping to help stay on track and to make sure you get everything you need for the week.



Sample One Day Menu

Breakfast

- Overnight oats topped with berries and nuts
- Morning snack: apples with peanut butter



Lunch

- Hearty salad (mixed greens, baked tofu, tomato, cucumber, avocado, almonds, salad dressing of your choice)
- Mid-day snack: baby carrots with hummus



Dinner

- Veggie bowl (brown rice, black beans, fresh salsa, grilled vegetables with seasonings, plain greek yogurt topped with cilantro)



More Plant-Based Meal Ideas

Breakfast

- **Smoothie or Smoothie Bowl**

- Frozen banana, peanut butter, Greek yogurt, with plant-based milk
- Frozen mango, peach, and spinach with plant-based milk
- Frozen berries and Greek yogurt with plant-based milk



- **Sweet or Savory Toast**

- Toast topped with either nut butter, berries, banana, and nuts or tomato and avocado.



- **Sweet or Savory Oatmeal**

- Oatmeal topped with either fruit or sautéed vegetables



- **Tofu Scramble**

- **Chia Seed Pudding**

- Ingredients:
 - 2-3 Tbsp chia seeds
 - ½ cup of plant-based milk (almond, cashew, oat, etc.)
- Mix together ingredients in a small container and stir well. Let sit in fridge overnight. Stir again, top with fruits and nuts of your choice. Enjoy!



More Plant-Based Meal Ideas



Lunch/Dinner

- Baked tofu with grilled vegetables and hummus wrap
- Grilled vegetable panini (whole wheat bread, grilled mushroom, grilled zucchini, and tomato)
- Black bean and corn burrito, taco, or quesadilla
- Grain bowls
- Salads topped with tofu and beans
- Bean soup
- Lentil curry
- Tofu and vegetable stir-fry
- Stuffed portobello mushrooms
- Black bean burgers

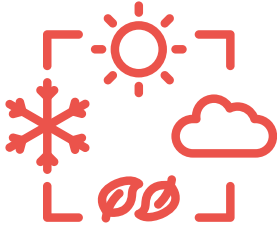
Snacks/Dessert

- Banana "nice" cream (frozen bananas blended with plant milk)
- Fruits with peanut butter and yogurt dip
- Vegetables with hummus
- Crispy roasted chickpeas
- Smoothie or smoothie bowl

Grocery Shopping Tips for a Plant-Based Diet

Here are some tips for grocery shopping on a budget along with a sample grocery list to help you start shopping for a plant-based diet:

1. Shop for seasonal produce.



- Seasonal produce is fresher (which means it will taste better!) and usually costs less. For example, buy zucchini in the summer months. Visit your local farmers' market for seasonal produce. Just before the farmer's market is closing, you may be able to buy some of the food for a lower price.



2. Use coupons and shop weekly deals when available.



3. Buy pantry items such as rice and beans in bulk.



4. Stock up on items with a longer shelf life when they are on sale.

- Frozen and canned fruits and vegetables are just as nutritious as fresh ones! Be sure to look for low sodium, no salt added, and no-sugar added options!

5. Check out ethnic supermarkets or other grocery stores to try new plant-based foods or ingredients.



6. If possible, plan meals ahead and bring a grocery list to help you stay on track.

Sample Grocery List

- Tofu
- Lentils
- Low sodium canned beans
- Peanut butter
- Nuts (almonds, cashews, pistachios, etc.)
- Protein powder to add to smoothies, sauces, soups, etc.
- Cheese or dairy-free cheese
- Dairy-free plant-milk (soy, oat, nut-based milk, etc.)
 - Note: Almond milk is not a good source of protein
- Olive oil
- Pepper
- Garlic powder
- No or low-sodium seasoning blends (Mrs. Dash, Italian seasoning, etc.)
- Seasonal vegetables
- Seasonal fruits
- Whole grain rice, bread, quinoa, tortilla, or pita bread



Your Plant-Based Diet Daily Action Plan

Following a personalized action plan can set you up for success and minimize stress when starting or staying on a plant-based diet.

Plant-Based Action Plan

Meal Planning

- Plan out which meals you want to eat for the week.
- Include a variety of fruits, vegetables, and proteins.
- If you are slowly transitioning, swap one animal-protein-based meal with one plant-based each week.
 - For example, swap a hamburger out for a black bean burger or a veggie burger.

Lifestyle

Make small changes to your daily habits to improve your general health.

- Eat lots of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Exercise for at least 30 minutes a day.
- Practice meaningful ways to reduce stress.
- Find a support team that can help motivate you to reach your goals.

Nutrients of Concern

- Protein, Omega-3 Fatty Acids, Iron, Zinc, Iodine, Calcium, Vitamin D, Vitamin B12 are more abundant in animal protein.
- Therefore, a variety of plant-based foods is needed to ensure you get all of these important nutrients.

Grocery Shopping

- Bring a grocery list to help you stay on track and buy all the ingredients needed for a week of meals.
- Check out the refrigerated section at grocery stores for plant-based foods.
- Explore new grocery stores.

Nutrition

- Enjoy the food you get from NourishedRx!

From Lesson to Action

What are some ways you can add more plant-based meals to your diet? Create a list of 5 recipes that you can incorporate into your diet throughout the next couple of weeks. See the ideas listed above!

What are important nutrients to be aware of in a plant-based diet?