

A Nutrition Guide for 11-18 year old vegans



A well-planned vegan diet can supply your body with all the nutrients it needs during this period of your life and beyond. As a starting point, take a look at the general advice about vegan nutrition on [The Vegan Society's website](https://www.thevegansociety.com/nutrition).

This guide will help you to learn more about vegan nutrition for 11-18 year olds. However, it is not designed to replace advice from health professionals. Please talk to a health professional about supplements to ensure that they are suitable for you. If you have concerns about your diet, ask your doctor for a referral to a registered dietitian.

High quality fuel and building blocks

Your body needs fuel and building blocks because it is growing and developing fast. Making healthy choices can help you to feel great, achieve your goals, and protect your current and future health. If you need to eat between meals, choose high quality snacks like whole grain breakfast cereal, wholemeal sandwiches, fortified plant milk and soya yoghurt, fruit, seeds and nuts.

Getting the balance right

The table below gives you an idea of how to balance the food groups in your diet:

Food group	Suggested intake
Fruit and vegetables (fresh, frozen, tinned or dried), including orange varieties and leafy greens	At least 5 x 80g portions (30g for dried fruit)
Starchy foods , ideally higher fibre choices, such as oats, sweet potato, wholemeal bread, wholewheat pasta and brown rice	Every meal
Protein-rich foods such as beans, chickpeas, lentils, tofu, soya milk and yoghurt alternatives and peanuts	Most meals
Nuts and seeds , especially those rich in omega-3 fat (see below)	Daily
Calcium-rich foods such as calcium-fortified foods and calcium-set tofu	Most meals

General guidelines issued by The Vegan Society. If you have concerns about your diet, please ask your doctor for a referral to a dietitian.

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Calcium

Bones develop rapidly during this period of your life, and extra calcium is required. Recommended daily intakes are 1000mg (milligrams) for boys and 800mg for girls¹. The table below provides some examples of the calcium contents of plant foods. You will notice that calcium-fortified foods and calcium-set tofu are particularly good sources of calcium. It is strongly recommended that your meals include these foods. Kale, pak choi, okra, spring greens, dried figs, chia seeds and almonds are also sources of calcium.

Amount of food	Calcium content ^{2,3,4} (mg)
100g uncooked firm calcium-set tofu	350
200ml fortified plant milk	240
2 slices of bread fortified with extra calcium	242
125g calcium-fortified soya yoghurt	150
80g cooked kale	120
30g dried figs	75
30g almonds	72
Tablespoon of chia seeds	69

Iron

You need plenty of iron too. Recommended daily intakes are 11.3mg (milligrams) for boys, and 14.8mg for girls to make up for menstrual losses¹. Beans, chickpeas, lentils, tofu, cashew nuts, chia seeds, ground linseed, hemp seeds, pumpkin seeds and quinoa provide good amounts of iron, as well as protein and zinc. Kale, raisins, dried figs, dried apricots and fortified breakfast cereals are also sources of iron. The table on the next page provides some examples of the iron contents of plant foods.

Adding vitamin C-rich food to meals helps with iron absorption. Good sources of vitamin C include pepper, broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, kiwi fruits, oranges, strawberries, pineapple, grapefruit and orange juice.

Amount of food	Amount of iron ^{3,4} (mg)
30g pumpkin seeds	3.0
100g uncooked firm calcium-set tofu	2.7
30g hulled hemp seeds	2.4
30g chia seeds	2.3
150g cooked quinoa	2.2
80g cooked red lentils	1.9
30g cashew nuts	1.9
30g ground linseed	1.7
80g reheated canned kidney beans	1.6
80g cooked kale	1.6
30g dried figs	1.3
30g dried apricots	1.2
80g reheated canned chickpeas	1.2
30g dried raisins	1.1

Omega-3 fats

You can obtain the essential omega-3 fat called alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) from nuts and seeds. The following options would help you to meet the minimum European recommendation for daily ALA intake^{5,6}.

- One and a half tablespoons of ground linseed
- One tablespoon of chia seeds
- Two and a half tablespoons of hemp seeds
- Six walnut halves

These foods can be stirred into cereal or soya yoghurt, or blended into smoothies.

Our bodies can convert ALA into long chain omega-3 fats called eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). European guidance suggests a daily intake of 250milligrams of EPA and DHA⁵, which vegans can obtain from microalgae through supplementation. However, we require research into the health benefits of these supplements for vegans.

Vitamin B12

Every vegan needs a reliable source of vitamin B12 in their diet, either through fortified foods or a supplement. Here are some tips:

- **Fortified foods:**
 - Eat at least twice a day
 - Vitamin B12 is added to some milk and yoghurt alternatives, vegan spread, nutritional yeast flakes and breakfast cereals
 - Daily intake of at least 3mcg (micrograms)
- Take a supplement, either at least 10mcg daily or at least 2000mcg weekly

Iodine

A reliable source of iodine is an important part of a vegan diet. This is because the iodine content of most plant foods is low and variable. 11-14 year olds require 130mcg (micrograms) per day, and 15-18 year olds require 140mcg per day¹. The use of a supplement is recommended.

Vitamin D

Everyone in the UK should consider vitamin D supplementation during autumn and winter. The recommended dose is 10 micrograms per day. It is recommended that people with darker skin and those who do not regularly expose their skin to sunlight take a supplement all year⁷. Vitamin D3 from lichen and D2 are vegan-friendly.

Summary

- Eat a balanced and varied diet in order to feel great and help your body to grow
- Include good sources of protein in most of your meals, such as beans, lentils, chickpeas, tofu, soya alternatives to milk and yoghurt or peanuts
- Hit your daily calcium target by including calcium-fortified foods or calcium-set tofu in your meals
- Eat nuts and seeds rich in omega-3 fat daily, such as walnuts, ground linseed, hemp seeds and chia seeds
- Use fortified foods or a supplement to provide essential vitamin B12
- Ensure that your diet contains a reliable source of iodine (a supplement is recommended)
- Take a daily vitamin D supplement during autumn and winter as a minimum (year-round supplementation is recommended for people who do not expose their skin to sunlight and those with darker skin)
- Consider supplementation of long chain omega-3 fats from microalgae

References

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