

Iodine

What is iodine and why do we need it?

Iodine is an essential mineral used by your body to make thyroid hormones, which play a key role in regulating metabolism and maintaining thyroid function.

Thyroid hormones are also crucial for growth and brain development during pregnancy and childhood.

Ensuring adequate iodine intake supports a healthy metabolic rate and helps prevent thyroid conditions such as hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid) and overactive thyroid. Both iodine deficiency and excessive iodine intake can lead to thyroid dysfunction.

How much iodine do you need?

In the UK, the general iodine intake recommended for adults is 140 mcg (micrograms) per day and should not exceed the safe upper limit of 600 mcg.

Requirements for pregnancy, breastfeeding and childhood are outlined in our information about different [life stages](#) available at www.vegansociety.com/nutrition.

There are concerns that some groups of people in the UK are not meeting the recommendations for iodine intake including teenage girls, those who are pregnant or breastfeeding and people who do not eat fish or dairy products.

How do vegans get enough iodine?

Most plant foods contain a low amount of iodine because it is not an essential mineral for their growth.

One exception to this is seaweed, which contains high amounts of iodine. Despite this, regular seaweed consumption is not recommended to ensure sufficient iodine intake because some varieties, particularly brown seaweed and kelp, have an extremely high iodine content. Consuming these seaweeds more than once a week can lead to excessive intake and potential thyroid dysfunction.

Arguably, taking a daily supplement containing iodine is the most reliable way to ensure adequate intake. Choose supplements that list potassium iodide or potassium iodate as the iodine source, rather than iodine derived from seaweed.

Iodine supplementation should not exceed 150 mcg per day. If you have a diagnosed thyroid condition, you should check with your GP before starting any iodine supplementation.

The Vegan Society sells a daily vitamin and mineral supplement called VEG 1, which is specifically designed for vegans and includes iodine along with selenium, vitamin B12, and vitamin D to promote health and support nutrient intake alongside a healthy, balanced vegan diet.

Another way to meet your iodine requirements is to consume at least 500mL of an iodine-fortified milk alternative daily. Not all dairy alternatives are fortified, but you can identify fortified products by looking for iodine on the nutrition label – around 25 mcg per 100 mL is a good level. You may also see potassium iodide in the list of ingredients.

Iodised salt is also available in many countries, but this is not a good option for ensuring adequate iodine intake. This is because diets high in salt remain a public health concern as excess salt has been linked to high blood pressure, which can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Iodine tips to take away

The following options are reliable ways of adding iodine to a vegan diet:

- Ensure a daily intake of around 500 mL of a fortified milk alternative that includes iodine
- Take a daily supplement containing potassium iodide or potassium iodate

Further information

You may be interested in checking out the following webpages:

- [Vegan diets and iodine: a vegan dietitian's perspective](#)
- [Life stages](#), including pregnancy, breastfeeding and different age groups

References

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