

## Vegetarian & Vegan Diets

This May the dietitians have been looking at vegetarian (not meat or fish), pescatarian (no meat, will eat fish) and vegan diets (no animal products), as Vegetarian Week falls in May. They have looked at what to consider if you are a vegetarian OR if you are just looking to eat less meat!

### Plant Based Proteins

Meat and fish are often a main source of protein in our diets. So if we cut them out, how do you get protein? Protein can come from a range of plant based sources:

- ◆ Beans /legumes/pulses e.g. chickpeas, lentil
- ◆ Nuts – whole or nut butter
- ◆ Soy / Meat alternatives – e.g. vegetarian sausages / burgers / chicken pieces
- ◆ Eggs

If you are not eating meat or fish at all, be sure to include a range of the above proteins, as no one of them include all the vital proteins your body needs alone.

### Why choose to eat less meat?

Many people are eating less and less meat in their diets, but why is this?

- ◆ **Health reasons** – reducing your intake of meat can help to reduce your cholesterol, whilst processed meats e.g. sausages have been linked with higher rates of bowel cancer
- ◆ **Sustainability** – a diet higher in fruit and vegetables and lower in red and processed meat is better for the planet
- ◆ **Animal welfare** – to stop consuming animals which have been bred for the food industry

### What can I put in my sandwich?

With meat and often cheese being a go to for a sandwich filling what options are there if you do not want to include animal products?

- ◆ Hummus and roasted vegetables
- ◆ Falafel and vegan mayo
- ◆ Veggie ham and salad
- ◆ Avocado and pesto

### Meal Swaps?

Want to keep eating some of your favourite meals but want to base them on plant based sources of protein instead?

Here are some of our favourite swaps you can make easily!

Chilli Con Carne → Mixed Bean Chilli  
Spaghetti Bolognese → Plant Based Mince Spag Bol  
Burger and Chips → Bean Burger with Vegan cheese  
Chicken Noodle Stir Fry → Tofu Noodle Stir Fry  
Meat Curry → Chickpea/ Lentil Curry

### What about iron?

Red meats are a main source of iron in the diet, but what do we do if we cut out red meat or reduce our intake?

Be sure to include some of the below foods which can be high in iron too:

- ◆ Fortified breakfast cereal (check the packet!)
- ◆ Dark green leafy vegetables, peas and beans
- ◆ Wholegrains
- ◆ Seeds and nuts

The absorption of iron from vegetarian sources is poorer, therefore we recommend taking them with a source of vitamin C e.g. citrus fruits /peppers.

### What about Fish?

If you are looking at swapping your meat for a different protein source fish can be a healthy option.

Fish is low in saturated fat, but some high in essential oils such as omega-3 (e.g. mackerel, salmon, sardines or fortified fish fingers). You can get some omega-3 from non-fish sources e.g. Rapeseed oil, hemp/flax seed, omega 3 supplements (from algae).

### Calcium and Vitamin D

With Cystic Fibrosis, calcium is very important to keep your bones strong. We often recommend getting this from dairy sources like milk and yogurt. Though, if your vegan it can be harder.

Plant/nut milks, alternative yogurts can be fortified with calcium. You can also get a small amount from dried fruit, almonds and green leafy vegetables.

Please speak to a dietitian if you are unsure if you are getting enough calcium. Ensure to continue to take your vitamin D supplements so this calcium is absorbed properly!

### What could I be missing?

B12 is the one vitamin you may be missing if you eat no animal products at all. It is found in meat, eggs and dairy.

If you are vegan consider B12 fortified foods e.g. cereals, yeast products, soya yogurts OR speak to your dietitian about a supplement!