You can use this vegetarian food guide pyramid to help you select foods and plan your meals. The vegetarian food groups are whole grains, protein foods like nuts and legumes, vegetables, fruits and oils. The pyramid has the number of servings of each group to have everyday. It also tells you how big a portion is.
WHAT IS A HEALTHY VEGETARIAN DIET?
Studies show some health benefits from eating a well-balanced vegetarian diet:
- Healthy weight
- Less heart disease, diabetes, or high blood pressure
- Less likely to get lung or colon cancer

Important Nutrients:
Iron
Vegetarians must choose foods carefully to get enough iron. Iron helps get oxygen to the cells of our body. Most adults need to get 8 milligrams of iron from their diet every day. Women who are still having periods need 18 mg.

Vegetarian foods that are good sources of iron include dried beans (pinto beans, garbanzo beans, navy beans, etc.), soybeans, tofu, spinach, chard, beet greens, blackstrap molasses, bulgur wheat, and dried fruit. Some vegetarian foods that have iron added to them like breakfast cereals. Eating foods that provide Vitamin C (oranges, grapefruit, potatoes, strawberries, cantaloupe, tomato, and broccoli) helps us use the iron in vegetarian foods better.

Vegetarians may want to take one-a-day vitamin-mineral supplement with iron.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protein</th>
<th>Calcium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everybody needs the right kind and the right amount of PROTEIN to stay strong and healthy. Protein is made up of “building blocks” that are called amino acids. Foods that come from animals (meat, fish, milk, eggs) and soy beans (tofu, soy milk, tempeh) have all of the protein building blocks we need. Many of the foods in a vegetarian diet are missing some of the necessary amino acids. In order to get the right amount of protein you can eat plant foods that complement each other. Here are some examples of vegetarian “combos” that provide complete protein:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grains and Legumes Cornbread and chili beans Beans in a tostada or burrito Brown rice and peas or lentils Lentil and barley soup Minestrone soup and whole grain bread Peanut butter sandwich Legumes, Nuts, and/or Seeds Peanuts and sunflower seeds Lentil casserole with sesame seeds Seed bread and split pea soup</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcium is important for our bones, teeth, and muscles. Younger people (19-50 years) need about 1000 milligrams of calcium everyday. People over 50 need about 1200 mg/day. If you don’t eat dairy foods (milk, cheese, yogurt), you will need to select other foods to get enough calcium. Plant sources of calcium include all types of greens (turnip, spinach, kale, beet, collard), tofu made with calcium, broccoli, calcium-fortified soy, almond, rice and coconut milk.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITAMIN B12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This vitamin comes primarily from animal-derived foods. A vegetarian diet that included dairy products or eggs provides adequate vitamin B12. Fortified foods, such as some brands of cereal, nutritional yeast, soy milk, or foods made from soy, are good non-animal sources of B12. Tempeh and sea vegetables may also contain some vitamin B12. Check labels to discover other products that are fortified with vitamin B12.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommended Books
The authors are registered dietitians who are practicing vegetarians. This book is a guide for following a plant-based diet. It defines vegetarianism, discusses health benefits, and gives nutrition plans for all ages.

The author is co-director of The Vegetarian Resource Group, a national nonprofit educational organization. The book has over 150 healthful and convenient recipes and their nutrient analyses.

This is a good vegetarian “starter” book. It has recipe ideas with simple instructions for dips, spreads, soups, salads, entrees, side dishes, breads, rolls and desserts. It has good “tips, tricks, and techniques” for adapting recipes to a vegetarian format.

This is a classic book about the social and personal significance of vegetarian diet. It includes simple rules for a healthy diet, discusses food combining for protein adequacy, and has hundreds of easy to make recipes.
WHAT IS A HEALTHY VEGETARIAN DIET?

Studies show some health benefits from eating a well balanced vegetarian diet:
- Healthy weight
- Less heart disease, diabetes, or high blood pressure
- Less likely to get lung or colon cancer

Important Nutrients:

Iron

Vegetarians must choose foods carefully to get enough iron. Iron helps get oxygen to the cells of our body. Most adults need to get 8 milligrams of iron from their diet every day. Women who are still having periods need 18 mg. Vegetarian foods that are good sources of iron include dried beans (pinto beans, garbanzo beans, navy beans, etc.), soybeans, tofu, spinach, chard, beet greens, blackstrap molasses, bulgur wheat, and dried fruit. Some vegetarian foods that have iron added to them like breakfast cereals. Eating foods that provide Vitamin C (oranges, grapefruit, potatoes, strawberries, cantaloupe, tomato, and broccoli) helps us use the iron in vegetarian foods better.

Vegetarians may want to take one-a-day vitamin-mineral supplement with iron.

Protein

Everybody needs the right kind and the right amount of PROTEIN to stay strong and healthy. Protein is made up of “building blocks” that are called amino acids.

Foods that come from animals (meat, fish, milk, eggs) and soy beans (tofu, soy milk, tempeh) have all of the protein building blocks we need. Many of the foods in a vegetarian diet are missing some of the necessary amino acids. In order to get the right amount of protein you can eat plant foods that complement each other. Here are some examples of vegetarian “combos” that provide complete protein:

- Grains and Legumes
  - Cornbread and chili beans
  - Brown rice and peas or lentils
  - Lentil and barley soup
  - Minestrone soup and whole grain bread
  - Peanut butter sandwich

- Legumes, Nuts, and/or Seeds
  - Peanuts and sunflower seeds
  - Lentil casserole with sesame seeds
  - Seed bread and split pea soup

- Dairy and Grains
  - Breakfast cereal and milk
  - Macaroni and cheese
  - Cheese sandwich
  - Rice cooked with milk rather than water
  - Peanut butter sandwich and yogurt

Calcium

Calcium is important for our bones, teeth, and muscles. Younger people (19-50 years) need about 1000 milligrams of calcium everyday. People over 50 need about 1200 mg/day.

If you don’t eat dairy foods (milk, cheese, yogurt), you will need to select other foods to get enough calcium.

Plant sources of calcium include all types of greens (turnip, spinach, kale, beet, collard), tofu made with calcium, broccoli, calcium-fortified soy, almond, rice and coconut milk.

VITAMIN B12

This vitamin comes primarily from animal-derived foods. A vegetarian diet that included dairy products or eggs provides adequate vitamin B12.

Fortified foods, such as some brands of cereal, nutritional yeast, soy milk, or foods made from soy, are good non-animal sources of B12. Tempeh and sea vegetables may also contain some vitamin B12.

Check labels to discover other products that are fortified with vitamin B12.

Recommended Books

- **Vegetarian Resource Group** by co-director of The Vegetarian Resource Group, a national nonprofit educational organization. The book has over 150 healthful and convenient recipes and their nutrient analyses.

This is a good vegetarian “starter” book. It has recipe ideas with simple instructions for dips, spreads, soups, salads, entrees, side dishes, breads, rolls and desserts. It has good “tips, tricks, and techniques” for adapting recipes to a vegetarian format.

This is a classic book about the social and personal significance of vegetarian diet. It includes simple rules for a healthy diet, discusses food combining for protein adequacy, and has hundreds of easy to make recipes.