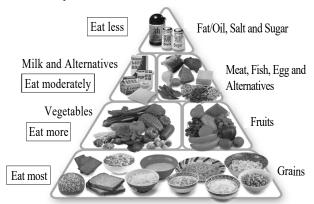
A healthy diet is very important

Food is divided into five groups: (1) Grains, (2) Fruits, (3) Vegetables, (4) Meat, Fish, Eggs and alternatives and (5) Milk and alternatives. The nutrients provided by these foods are carbohydrates, protein, fat, minerals and vitamins. Our body obtains different amounts of nutrients from different types of food and then utilises them to promote growth, help development and maintain health. Therefore, in order to obtain sufficient amount of nutrients, we should not be a picky eater.

Eating according to the proportions recommended by "Healthy Eating Food Pyramid" is the key to healthy diet.



Reference: Centre for Health Protection, Department of Health

What is a vegetarian diet?

It is a kind of diet that includes mainly fruits, vegetables and grains but excludes all meat. It has become more popular in recent years for the following reasons:

- ❖ Some people believe that vegetarian diet is healthier
- ❖ Some have religious reasons and refrain from eating meat
- ❖ Some have special beliefs such as environmental protection and animal rights protection
- ❖ Some people simply want to control their weight and therefore cut down on meat consumption

Types of vegetarian diet		
Vegan	 Consumes only fruits, vegetables and grains Does not take dairy products, eggs and meat 	
Lacto- vegetarian	 Consumes only dairy products, fruits, vegetables and grains Does not take eggs and meat 	
Ovo- vegetarian	 Consumes only eggs, fruits, vegetables and grains Does not take dairy products and meat 	
Lacto-ovo- vegetarian	 Consumes only dairy products, eggs, fruits, vegetables and grains Does not take meat 	

Examples of vegetarian food

- ❖ Grains : red rice, brown rice, white rice, bread, oatmeal
- Nuts and seeds: lotus seed, almond, macadamia nut, hazelnut, brazil nut
- ❖ Beans, bean products and legumes : soya bean, lentil, red kidney bean, chicken pea, tofu, peanuts
- Fruits and vegetables: bok choy, lettuce, carrot, tomato, mushroom, pumpkin, cucumber, apple, orange, banana

Benefits of vegetarian diet

- Vegetarian food is rich in dietary fibre, giving a sensation of fullness, which in turn can control food intake and help maintain a normal body weight.
- Decrease the risk of colon cancer, haemorrhoids, constipation, heart disease, hypertension, stroke, cancer and gallstones.

Tips of vegetarian diet for children and vouth

A balanced vegetarian diet can support growth during childhood. However, obtaining adequate nutrients (especially protein, vitamin B12 and iron) from vegetarian diet needs more effort when planning the diet so as not to cause malnutrition, anaemia or other diseases.

Puberty is a period of which youths need more energy and nutrients. Some teenagers may not obtain adequate nutrients from breakfast, lunch and dinner. Therefore they should choose nuts, fruits, nutrients fortified plant-based milk and low fat dairy products e.g. milk, cheese, yoghurts etc. as snacks to replace junk foods such as candies, chips, sugary beverages etc.. Choosing vegetarian foods carefully can help build healthy eating habits.

In general, vegetarian foods do not have strong taste and are not particularly appetizing. Parents need to put more efforts and be more creative in their cooking by using different spices, vegetarian foods and cooking methods to make different dishes in order to increase children's interest in food and stimulate their appetite.



Important nutrients for vegetarian children and youth

Fats	Vegetarian should limit intake of saturated fat and trans fat intake as much as possible.
	Eating too much foods with saturated fat and trans fat e.g. products made with coconut oil, palm oil, hydrogenated/partially hydrogenated fat, shortening etc. would increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases.
	• Replace saturated fat and trans fat with healthy fats e.g. avocado, olive oil, peanut oil, sunflower seed oil, nuts and seeds.
Protein	• Protein is composed of amino acids but there are 9 kinds of amino acids need to be obtained from foods only i.e. essential amino acids.
	• Protein from animal foods e.g. meat, fish, seafood, eggs, dairy products (milk, cheese, yoghurt etc.) can provide all essential amino acids.
	• Except soy, quinoa and buckwheat, protein from plant foods lacks certain type(s) of essential amino acids. Therefore, vegetarian especially vegan should eat different types of plant foods every day in order to obtain adequate essential amino acids e.g. tofu, nuts, seeds, dried beans and grains.
Iron	Iron from plant foods is not well absorbed compared with iron from meat.
	• Spinach, prunes, dried apricots, dried beans, iron fortified breakfast cereals are rich in iron.
	• Intake of food rich in vitamin C e.g. oranges, kiwi with high iron foods can enhance the absorption of iron from plant foods.
Calcium	Foods rich in calcium include dairy products, bok choy, broccoli, almonds, firm tofu, and sesame.
	• Foods high in salt and caffeinated beverages e.g. tea and coffee, etc. increase calcium loss.
	Sun exposure helps the skin to produce vitamin D which in turn helps absorption of calcium.
Zinc	• Foods rich in zinc include whole grains, dried beans, nuts, spinach, etc.
Iodine	Foods rich in iodine include seaweed, kelp, seafood, marine fish, eggs, milk and dairy products.
	• Use iodised salt instead of ordinary table salt if additional salt is required, keeping total salt intake below 5g (1 teaspoon) per day.
Omega-3 fatty acids	Omega 3 fatty acids e.g. EPA, DHA mainly come from seafood.
	• α-linolenic acid (ALA) from plant foods is also a type of omega-3 fatty acids.
	Part of ingested ALA can be converted into EPA and DHA for body use.
	Good ALA sources include walnuts, flaxseeds and chia seeds.
Vitamin B12	• Vitamin B12 is mainly found in animal foods e.g. meat, fish, seafood, eggs and dairy products (including milk, cheese, yoghurt, etc.).
	• For those who are on vegan diet, they should consider taking Vitamin B12 supplement or choose the plant
	 foods with added vitamin B12 such as vitamin B12 added breakfast cereals, soy milk, etc. When buying pre-packaged foods, read the food labels to ensure vitamin B12 is added.
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If necessary, please consult your family doctor before purchasing food supplements so as not to affect your health.

Student Health Service website: www.studenthealth.gov.hk

Vegetarian Diet and Nutrition



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