

# Healthy Guidelines for Lacto-Ovo Vegetarians

A lacto-ovo vegetarian diet includes grains, vegetables, fruit, legumes (dried beans, peas and lentils), seeds, nuts, dairy products and eggs. It excludes any meat, fish, poultry and any products that contain these foods.

A healthy lacto-ovo vegetarian diet has many health benefits including lower rates of obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer.

It may take planning to get enough protein, iron, zinc and omega-3 fats, but a healthy lacto-ovo vegetarian diet can meet all your nutrient needs at any stage of life including when you are pregnant, breastfeeding or for older adults.

## Steps You Can Take

Follow [Canada's Food Guide](#) to plan your meals and snacks. This will help make sure that your diet is healthy, well balanced and includes all the following nutrients:

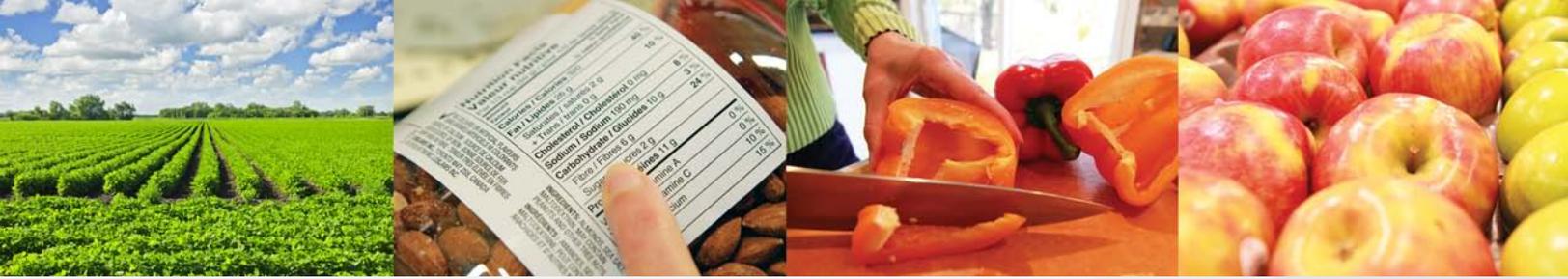
### Protein

Protein is important for building and keeping muscles and red blood cells healthy. Protein supports growth throughout the life cycle. Some examples of protein sources include:

- soy and soy products like tofu, tempeh and fortified soy beverages
- meat alternatives like textured vegetable protein (TVP) and veggie burgers
- dried beans (kidney, black and white beans), peas (chickpeas and black-eyed peas) and lentils (red, brown and green lentils)
- grains (quinoa, bulgur, rice and oatmeal)
- nuts, nut butters (hazelnuts and almond butter) and seeds (sesame and sunflower)
- peanuts and peanut butter
- dairy products like skim, 1% or 2% milk and yogurt and low fat ( $\leq$  20% M.F.) cheese
- eggs.

### Iron

Iron helps carry oxygen to different parts of the body. Vegetarians need to eat about twice as much iron as non-vegetarians because the iron from plant foods (non-heme iron) isn't as well absorbed as the iron from animal



foods (heme iron). To meet these needs, vegetarians should choose iron-rich foods daily. Good sources of non-heme iron include:

- soy and soy products like firm or extra firm tofu, tempeh and fortified soy beverages
- meat alternatives like textured vegetable protein (TVP) and veggie burgers
- dried beans, peas and lentils like kidney, pinto and adzuki beans, chickpeas and black-eyed peas, and red, brown and green lentils
- fortified grain products (breads, cereals and pasta)
- some nuts and seeds like cashews, almonds, pumpkin and sesame seeds
- prune juice and dried apricots
- vegetables like cooked spinach, kale and potatoes with their skins
- black strap molasses.

Iron from vegetarian sources is better absorbed when eaten with vitamin C-rich foods. Examples of vitamin C-rich foods include oranges and grapefruits and their juices, lemons, limes, kiwis, mangos, cantaloupe, potatoes, sweet peppers, broccoli, snow peas and some green leafy vegetables.

## Zinc

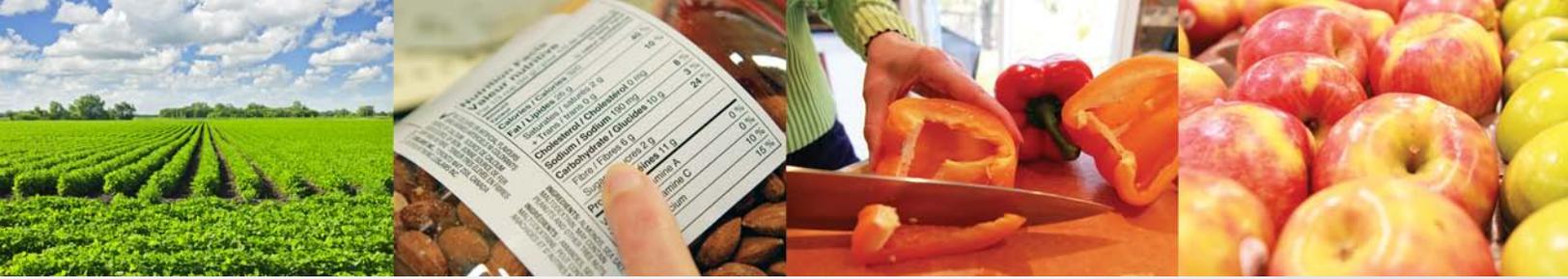
Zinc is needed for growth and development. It also helps strengthen the immune system and heal wounds. Good sources of zinc include:

- soy and soy products like tofu and fortified soy beverages
- dried beans, peas and lentils
- some nuts like pecans and cashews and their butters like cashew butter
- peanuts and peanut butter
- pumpkin seeds and sesame seed butter (tahini)
- whole grains and fortified cereals.

## Linolenic acid (omega-3 fat)

Omega-3 fats are helpful in preventing heart disease and important for eye, nerve and brain development. Good sources of omega-3 fats include:

- oils like canola, flaxseed, walnut and soybean
- ground flaxseed
- soybeans, tofu and walnuts.



## Calcium, vitamin B12, vitamin D

A healthy lacto-ovo vegetarian diet that follows Canada's Food Guide and includes dairy products and eggs can provide enough calcium, vitamin B12 and vitamin D.

### Special Considerations

#### Pregnant and breastfeeding women

Pregnant (including those planning to become pregnant) and breastfeeding women should follow [Canada's Food Guide](#), with special attention to the nutrients above. If you are concerned that you are not getting enough of any nutrient, speak with your doctor or a dietitian.

All pregnant women should take a prenatal supplement that contains 400 micrograms (mcg) folate and 16-20 milligrams (mg) of iron. The supplement should also contain vitamin B12.

#### Older adults

If you are over the age of 50, it is important to get enough vitamin D, vitamin B12 and calcium. As you get older, your body absorbs vitamin D and vitamin B12 less effectively. For this reason, Canada's Food Guide states that you should take a vitamin D supplement of 400 IU each day. You should also get vitamin B12 from fortified foods (fortified soy products) or a supplement. Include three servings of milk and milk alternatives each day to help meet your calcium needs. A daily multivitamin-mineral supplement will help meet these needs.



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