

“Does this mean being vegan?”

No. The clue is in the word ‘based’. A whole-food plant **based** diet can include some animal foods.

On average vegans have better health than non-vegans, however, this one word “vegan” isn’t the best guide when you are out shopping. Like a lot of ‘health-halo’ words it doesn’t always mean really healthy. In the last 10 years the shops have filled up with junk and processed foods which can be labelled ‘vegan’. A lot of vegan snacks, ‘cheeses’, and ‘meats’ are highly processed food and may be best avoided.

“If I eat less meat, dairy and eggs, where will I get my protein?”

Western diet provides about 30 - 40% calories from protein. In reality, healthy **adults** only need about 12% of calories from protein. A lot of the rest of the protein people eat gets used for energy or stored as fat. Aside from some refined foods such as oils, sugar, salt, and pure starch powder, **all foods contains protein**. You can get all the protein you need by eating a wide range of plant-foods (despite what you may hear!) and it is quite hard to eat too little protein. The exceptions to this 12% amount are: **children**, and people with **some medical conditions**, or who are **recovering from major illness** may need more protein, and the same may be true of elderly people. In all these cases enough protein could be obtained from whole plant food, but of course many of us choose to eat some eggs, cheeses, fish or meat.

“Won’t beans and lentils give me terrible wind?”

People who eat beans and lentils all the time don’t fart more than other people. Introducing any new food into your diet can cause excess wind. The effect from beans and lentils is very well known, but it doesn’t affect everyone, and it also settles after 2 - 3 weeks. If you suffer from wind, or are worried about it, you can get round this problem by **introducing these foods gradually with just a tiny amount to start with**. Try different kinds of bean/lentil too.

“Will I be missing minerals and vitamins, like iron, calcium, vitamin D and B12?”

People who eat 100% plant-based diets or who eat little animal food, should take a B12 supplement daily. Iron deficiency is common amongst meat-eaters, and the iron in plant foods is easy to absorb. So if you are worried about iron you could get it checked. Calcium is in lots of whole-plant foods. It is hard to get too little if you eat many different kinds of plant-foods all the time. Vitamin D3 supplements are probably sensible for anyone that doesn’t get outside, and during the times of year when we get very little sun on our skins. This will be more important if you eat very little meat or eggs.

“What about “carbs”? Aren’t all “carbs” bad? Potatoes, grains and beans are “carbs” aren’t they?”

Just now there is a lot of excitement about “low carb diets”. Just like “vegan” diets these can be more or less healthy or unhealthy, depending on how much unprocessed plant food they contain. Most “low carb” diets are an improvement on Standard Western Diet. But there is a problem with this word “carbs”.

If by “carbs” we mean sugar, foods and drinks containing added sugar, white flour and foods made from white flour, white rice etc, then yes, everyone agrees: the less we eat these foods the better our diet will be. Other so-called “carbs” are healthy foods, and people that eat them have better health and lifespan than people who don’t. Examples are: all whole-grains and foods made from whole grains, all root vegetables, all legumes, and fresh fruits, particularly berries with bright colour and strong flavour.

For more information on grains and processing do have a look at

[“Processed Food: What does that Mean?”](#).

“Is this going to be expensive?”

Only if you buy a lot of ‘special foods’, which aren’t necessary. Processed and Junk foods are generally quite cheap, this is true. And it is also true that the basic ingredients of a whole-food plant-based diet - whole grains, legumes, seasonal veg and fruit - are fairly cheap. That is why these foods are the basic foods that people have relied on throughout history, all over the world. **(continued on next page ...)**

The key to eating cheaply for less money is often finding not just some time to prepare food, but having some basic equipment and also the skills and know-how to do it. Lots of people haven't been shown how to prepare these foods yet, so if you are in this position don't worry - you aren't alone. We have listed some resources in [Eat More Plants: Why, What and How?](#).

“What about essential oils, omega 3's, oily fish, and things like that?”

We are told that Fish, particularly 'oily fish' like mackrel, sardines, wild salmon, is THE place we get essential fats called omega 3's. If you like oily fish, 2 - 3 servings a week is still considered safe at present. But if you don't like fish, or don't much mind either way, you can feel fine about eating little or no fish. Here is why:

Our bodies can, if necessary, make all the different fats and oils we need, except two we can't make. These 'essential' oils have got long names: "Linolenic Acid" (LA) and "Alpha-Linolenic Acid" (ALA). Our bodies can make a family of fats from ALA called the 'omega-3' fatty acids, and a family made from LA called omega-6. Generally our diets nowadays contain too much of the omega-6 family and too little omega-3. The other problem is that some people particularly men, and particularly those with a poor diet, heavy drinkers or generally health may not manage to make enough of this omega-3 family from ALA.

This is important because two of the omega-3 family are known to be particularly vital for brain and eye health as well as damping down inflammation. They are usually called EPA and DHA. It is considered a good 'insurance policy' to make sure our diets have EPA and DHA, though there is no official recommended daily intake, like there is for vitamins.

Fish also get most of their EPA and DHA their diet, and most of it was made by microscopic plants called plankton in the oceans and by algae in rivers and lakes.

The good news is we don't NEED the fish for either their protein or the omega-3s. We can get these from plant sources if we choose. This is important to know because it is not just the good oils that get concentrated in the oily fish, including farmed salmon. These days they are also full of harmful poisons like mercury that have ended up in the oceans over the last 100 years. This is before we even consider the environmental impact of fishing and fish-farming.

Best plant-based sources of ALA

Most nuts and seeds, but particularly flax and chia seeds, and walnuts.

Chia and flax seeds must be ground before eating (best done at home) otherwise you won't get the benefit.

2 tablespoons of fresh-ground flax or chia will provide enough ALA to convert to enough EPA and DHA for almost everyone. Women are almost certain to get enough from these 2 tablespoons. Most men will manage too.

Plant based sources of EPA and DHA

Algae-based omega-3 supplements.

Check the labels for EPA and DHA, don't be fobbed off with a capsule full of ALA only, because it will be better and cheaper to get this from your food.

Good supplements will have at least 150mcg EPA and 250mcg DHA.

reasonably priced supplements for plant-based diet ([others are available!](#))

Veg-1 is a really good supplement supplied at low cost by the Vegan Society, it has B12 and D3, and more.

Testa and **Nothing Fishy** are both good well-priced EPA/DHA supplements.