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# Plant-Based Diet

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A plant-based diet contains vegetables, beans and legumes, fruits, whole grains, nuts and seeds. It does not include meat, poultry, wild game, seafood, eggs, dairy (milk, yogurt, cheese) or any other foods that contain these products.

## Why Do People Choose a Plant-Based Diet?

- **Healthy Body Weight.** On average those who follow a plant-based diet weigh less than those who follow a Standard American Diet (SAD).
- **Heart Health.** A plant-based diet can help prevent or reverse heart disease, the number 1 killer of Americans.
- **Cancer Prevention.** A plant-based diet has been associated with greater protection against all types of cancer.
- **Diabetes Prevention and Management.** Plant-based diets have been shown effective in preventing, managing and treating diabetes.
- **Protect the Environment.** Plant-based diets are more environmentally sustainable than diets rich in animal products because they use fewer natural resources, such as water and are associated with less environmental damage.
- **Animal Rights.**

## What are the Parts of a Plant-Based Diet?

### Vegetables

Vegetables are the healthiest foods on the planet. They are naturally low in calories, high in fiber, and high in nutrients. Green leafy vegetables are essential for optimal health and you should eat them every day. Vegetables should be the basis of your diet.

- Artichoke
- Arugula
- Asparagus
- Beets
- Bell peppers
- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Collard greens
- Cucumber
- Eggplant
- Garlic
- Kale
- Mushrooms
- Okra
- Onions
- Potatoes
- Rhubarb
- Romaine Lettuce
- Spinach
- Summer squash
- Sweet potatoes
- Tomatoes
- Turnip greens
- Winter squash
- Zucchini

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## Beans and Legumes

Beans are a great source of healthy protein and carbohydrate. They contain lots of fiber and resistant starch, which help fill you up and prevent you from absorbing 100% of the calories in beans. Canned beans are ok – look for low-sodium and reduced-sodium options.

- Adzuki
- Black beans
- Black-eyed peas
- Cannellini
- Chick peas (garbanzo)
- Dark red kidneys
- Great northern
- Light red kidneys
- Lima beans
- Mung
- Pinto
- Fava beans
- Navy beans
- Soy beans (edamame)
- Lentils

## Fruit

Fruit is an excellent source of fiber, water, vitamins, and minerals. It is a healthy source of carbohydrates. You should include at least 3 servings of fruit per day. Try purchasing frozen fruit which is less expensive and won't go bad.

- Apples
- Bananas
- Oranges
- Kiwi
- Pineapple
- Strawberries
- Blueberries
- Blackberries
- Raspberries
- Grapefruit
- Grapes
- Cantaloupe
- Watermelon
- Honeydew
- Nectarines
- Peaches
- Pears
- Plums

## Whole Grains

Whole grains are a great source of fiber and are satisfying and filling. Whole grains that are in their natural form contain the most nutrition and fiber. Enjoy these whole grains alongside different beans and vegetables.

- Oats
- Brown Rice
- Quinoa
- Barley
- Bulgur
- Amaranth
- Kamut
- Kasha
- Millet
- Rye berries
- Wheat berries
- Spelt
- Teff

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## Other Grains

Processed grains can contribute to nutrition and fiber however to a lesser extent. When buying these products make sure the first ingredient is whole grain or whole wheat and there is at least 3 g fiber per serving.

- 100% whole wheat bread, tortillas, English muffin
- 100% Whole grain crackers
- Unsweetened Cereals

Refined grains are highly processed and often are stripped of their nutrition and fiber. Avoid these foods as much as possible.

- White bread, tortillas, bagels and crackers
- Sugary cereals
- Candy bars, snack cakes, pastries and cookies
- Sugary breakfast and granola bars

## Nuts and Seeds

- Nuts and seeds are the best sources of fat because they also provide fiber, vitamins, & minerals. The eating of nuts is associated with longevity.
- Eat as a snack, sprinkle on salads, add to smoothies, or use as a base to make your own healthy dressings.
- Aim for 1-2 ounces of nuts daily.
- A 1 ounce serving is 20-24 almonds, 10-14 walnut halves, 18-20 pecans, 16-18 cashews, 30-34 peanuts, 2 Tbsp. peanut butter or any nut butter.
- Flaxseed, chia seeds, and walnuts are particularly good sources of omega-3 fatty acids.
- Buy ground flaxseed or put flaxseeds or chia seeds in smoothies for greatest nutritional benefit.

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| • Peanuts       | • Cashews        | • Walnuts         |
| • Peanut butter | • Chestnuts      | • Flaxseed        |
| • Almonds       | • Hazelnuts      | • Pumpkin seeds   |
| • Almond butter | • Macadamia nuts | • Chia seeds      |
| • Pistachios    | • Pecans         | • Sesame seeds    |
| • Brazil nuts   | • Pine nuts      | • Sunflower seeds |

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## Alternative Protein Sources

In addition to getting protein from beans, nuts, seeds and certain whole grains and vegetables, the following protein sources can replace the meat portion of your plate.

- **Tofu** is made from cooked soybeans. It has a mild nutty taste that takes on the flavor of the food with which it's cooked. Firm and extra-firm tofu are good replacements for meat dishes. Silken tofu is great for adding to soups, sauces and smoothies. Pre-baked flavored tofu is a quick option which can be added to salads and meals.
- **Tempeh** is a soybean patty made by fermenting cooked soybeans. It has a nutty flavor and a firmer texture than tofu. It quickly absorbs the flavors of which it is cooked. You may also find tempeh pre-marinated and in strips which is convenient for wraps, sandwiches, stir-fry, stews or salads.
- **Seitan** is gluten, the protein portion of wheat. It has a chewy texture like chicken or turkey. Seitan can be found pre-flavored and a great addition to stews, curries and roasts. If you have celiac disease or gluten-sensitivity, then you should avoid seitan.
- **Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP)** is isolated soy protein with the texture of ground meat or turkey. It can be used when making chili, stews, meat sauce and tacos. This is a dry product and takes only a few minutes to reconstitute before seasoning and cooking.
- **Meat Substitutes** often called "faux meat" include a large range of products which imitate the texture and taste of ground meat, bacon, meatballs, sausage, chicken, chicken patties and more.

## Snacks

- Fresh fruit or unsweetened dried or packaged fruit (applesauce, fruit cups)
- Nuts, nut butter, or seeds
- Vegetables (baby carrots, cauliflower, bell peppers, radishes, broccoli, snap peas, celery) or pretzels with hummus
- Edamame
- Air-popped popcorn, kettle corn (try with nutritional yeast)
- Bars made with only whole ingredients
- Unsweetened cereal with plant-based milk
- Whole grain English muffin topped with avocado and tomato
- See the "Plant-Based Snacks" handout for more ideas!

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## Beverages

The best beverage to drink is water. Other healthful options include:

- Unsweetened tea (black, green, hibiscus)
- Carbonated water
- Black coffee

Replace dairy milks with non-dairy milks such as almond, soy, coconut, cashew, rice, flax, macadamia, or oat.

Choose whole fruits and vegetables over 100% fruit and/or vegetable juices to maximize your intake of vitamins, minerals and fiber.

Avoid sweetened beverages as they only provide empty calories.

- Soda
- Sweet tea
- Fruit drinks
- Sports Drinks
- Energy Drinks
- Alcohol

## How Do You Adopt a Plant-Based Diet?

- **Go Meatless One Day a Week.** Pick one day of the week to enjoy foods only of plant origin. You may have heard of “Meatless Monday,” the global movement to “once a week, cut the meat.” Originally started during WWI, the goal is to reduce overall meat consumption to promote health of humans and the planet.
- **Begin with Breakfast.** Make your most important meal of the day plant-based:
  - Oatmeal or quinoa with fruits, nuts and seeds
  - Green smoothies (leafy greens, vegetables, frozen or fresh fruit, non-dairy milk, nuts, seeds)
  - Unsweetened cereals with non-dairy milk topped with fruit
  - 100% whole wheat bread with nut butter and fruit
  - Tofu scramble with beans and baked sweet potato home fries
- **Plant-Based Until Dinner.** Add a plant-based power lunch to your agenda:
  - Large salad with your favorite greens, vegetables, beans, nuts, seeds and fruits with a low-fat vinaigrette dressing
  - Vegetable and bean-based soups, stews or chilis
  - Veggie wrap with hummus or nut butter and fruit sandwich
- **Jump Right In.** For those who are ready to go cold “tofurkey” and transition to a fully plant-based diet, grab this handout and head to your grocery store!

# Plant-Based Food Guide Pyramid

