

veganism



Veganism is a diet that consists entirely of plant origins and does not contain any animal products. This presents unique nutritional challenges because the lack of meat and dairy means the loss of some of the most common sources of protein, iron, calcium, and Vitamins D, B12 and zinc.

Many vegans combat this with dietary supplements that can make up for the loss of these nutrients, but there are also natural food sources of these nutrients that can fit into a vegan diet.

Here are nutrients that may be deficient in a vegan diet and how you can get these nutrients from plant based sources:

PROTEIN Your body needs protein to maintain healthy skin, bones, muscles and organs. Vegan sources of protein include soy products such as tofu, legumes, lentils, nuts, seeds and whole grains.

CALCIUM This mineral helps build and maintain strong teeth and bones. Dark green vegetables are good sources of calcium. Tofu enriched with calcium and fortified soy milk and fruit juices are other options.

VITAMIN D Vitamin D works with calcium to protect your bones. Vegans can obtain Vitamin D from fortified soy milk, juices and cereals.

VITAMIN B-12 Your body needs Vitamin B-12 to produce red blood cells and prevent anemia. This vitamin is found almost exclusively in animal products, including milk, eggs and cheese. Vegans can get Vitamin B-12 from

some enriched cereals, fortified soy products or by taking a supplement that contains this vitamin.

IRON Like Vitamin B-12, iron is a crucial component of red blood cells. Dried beans and peas, lentils, enriched cereals, whole-grain products, dark leafy green vegetables, and dried fruit are good sources of iron. To help increase absorption of plant sources of iron, eat foods rich in Vitamin C — such as strawberries, citrus fruits, tomatoes, cabbage and broccoli — at the same time you consume iron-containing foods.

ZINC This mineral is an essential component of many enzymes and plays a role in cell division and in the formation of proteins. Good sources of zinc include whole grains, soy products, nuts and wheat germ.

*Mayo Clinic 2008
US Department of Agriculture 2008
Epicurean Group 2010*