



Health-Full Eating & Nutrition



Working Strong With a Vegetarian Diet

The vegetarian diet has continued to gain popularity over the years. It has become so popular that even athletes and body-builders use the diet while training. Improvement in various health problems have even been linked to a vegetarian diet. Yet, there is still question on how we can get all our nutritional needs without meat in our diet. Like most things in life, balance is key. With the proper nutritional balance, your body can be just as strong, sustainable and healthy as it would with any nutritional diet. Let's look at the ways to gain strength and stamina on a vegetarian diet.



Don't Cut-out Food Groups

A common mistake people make when starting a vegetarian diet is omitting meat and not replacing meat with other options. Meat is categorized under the "protein" category in your diet. Therefore, if you remove the meat from your plate, you still want to replace with protein from another source.

Pick Complete Proteins

A complete protein means it contains all nine essential amino acids. Plant-based protein like legumes, grains, nuts and seeds are all great sources, but on their own they are not a complete protein. It is important to pair proteins that complement each other such as beans and rice or bread and nut butters. The best way to ensure you are getting all the essential amino acids is to eat from a wide variety of plant-based protein sources.

Focus on Nutrient-Dense Foods

It's important to make sure you are getting an adequate supply of nutrients typically found in meat.

Iron

Iron can be found in foods like spinach, nuts and whole grains. Sometimes iron in plant foods can be hard for the body to absorb. Consuming vitamin C and citrus fruits can help improve absorption.

Vitamin B12

B12 is a vitamin essential for nerve function. Dairy is a great source of B12 but if you choose a dairy-free diet you'll need to include some B12-rich foods. Vitamin B12 can be found in foods like textured vegetables, soy milk and whole grain cereals. If you still feel you are lacking vitamin B12, consider taking a multivitamin.

Vegetarian Food Replacement Ideas

- Pasta with Chicken – replace chicken with tofu
- Tacos – replace beef with lentils & cheese
- Burger – replace beef with a vegetarian patty
- Lasagna – replace meat with black beans

A vegetarian diet doesn't have to be restrictive. There are plenty of plant-based foods with strengthening and stamina-building nutrients!



References:

- <https://www.active.com/nutrition/articles/how-to-ride-strong-on-a-vegetarian-diet>
- <https://www.onegreenplanet.org/natural-health/how-to-gain-strength-and-stamina-on-a-vegan-diet/>