

Beginner's Guide to Plant- Based Eating



Appendix

Protein in Plant-Based Diets	Pg 1
Key Amino Acids for Vegans	Pg 2
Whole Soy Foods	Pg 3
Beans, Lentils, and Chickpeas: Tips for Easy Digestion....	Pg 4
Calcium	Pg 5
Iron	Pg 6
Zinc	Pg 7
Iodine	Pg 8
Healthy Fats	Pg 9-10
Vitamin B12	Pg 11
How to Replace Dairy Milk and Half-and-Half	Pg 12
Plant-Based Cheese	Pg 13
Plant-Based Yogurt, Heavy Cream, and Ice Cream	Pg 14
Common Vegan Egg Replacements	Pg 15
Specialty Vegan Egg Replacements	Pg 16
Recommended Plant-Based Recipe Resources	Pg 17

Protein in Plant-Based Diets

What Are Amino Acids and Why Do They Matter?

Amino acids are the **building blocks of protein**, which your body needs to grow, heal, and stay strong. There are 20 amino acids, and 9 of them are essential, meaning your body can't make them and you must get them from food.

The good news is that by eating a variety of plant-based foods, you can get all the essential amino acids your body needs to stay healthy (Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, EatRight.org).

Daily Protein Recommendations

- Adults under 60: **0.36** grams/pound
- Adults over 60: **0.45** grams/pound
- Athletes: **0.6–0.8** grams/pound

Example: If you weigh 180 lbs and are over 60:

$$0.45 \times 180 = 81 \text{ g of protein/day}$$

Average Protein Content Per Serving (grams)

- **Beans/Lentils/Chickpeas:** ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked): 10 g
- **Tofu** ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup): 10–20 g
- **Soy milk** (1 cup): 6–11 g
- **Tempeh** ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup): 16 g
- **Nuts & Seeds** ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup): 5 g
- **Grains** ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked/1 slice bread): 3.5 g
- **Vegetables** ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup): 1.6 g
- **Fruits** ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup): 0.8 g
- **Processed plant-based meats:** 10–20 g
- **Plant-based protein shakes:** 10–20 g

Key Amino Acids for Vegans

Lysine	Tryptophan
Function: helps build protein and repair tissues	Function: supports mood, sleep and tissue health
Daily Recommendation: 14 mg per pound of body weight	Daily Recommendation: 200-400 mg/day
Example: a 180 lb person needs $14 \times 180 = 2520$ mg/day	
Average Content per Serving:	Average Content per Serving:
Beans/Lentils/Chickpeas ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked): 594 mg	Beans/Lentils/Chickpeas ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked): 111mg
Tempeh ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup): 800 mg	Tempeh ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup): 200 mg
Tofu ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup): 700 mg	Tofu ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup): 230 mg
Grains ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked or 1 slice bread): 119 mg	Grains ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked or 1 slice bread): 40 mg
Nuts and seeds ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup): 219 mg	Nuts and seeds ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup): 85 mg
Vegetables ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup): 80 mg	Vegetables ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup): 19 mg
Fruit ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup): 40 mg	Fruit ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup): 10 mg

The Power of Soy: Complete Proteins from Plant-Based Sources

What Are Soy Foods?

Tofu, soy milk, edamame, and tempeh are examples of soy foods, which come from soy beans.

Nutritional Benefits:

- Packed with **protein** and provide all **essential amino acids**.
- Rich in important **vitamins** and **minerals**.
- Offer similar nutrition to **protein from consuming animals**, making them an excellent replacement.

Health Benefits:

Soy foods may help lower the risk of breast cancer and heart disease (American Cancer Society).

Daily Recommendations:

2-4 servings of soy foods per day.

click below for a complete guide to cooking tofu:

<https://rainbowplantlife.com/guide-to-tofu/>

Beans, Lentils, and Chickpeas: Tips for Easy Digestion

Start Small:

- Begin with small portions and gradually increase. This allows your body to develop the bacteria needed to digest the sugars in beans that can sometimes cause gas.

Easier Options:

- **Split peas** and **lentils** are often easier to digest than other beans.

Tips for Reducing Gas:

For Canned Beans:

Cook them in their liquid for 10 minutes, then thoroughly rinse before eating.

For Dry Beans:

Soak for at least 12 hours, discard the water before cooking.

★ Beans, lentils, and chickpeas are rich in **protein**, **fiber**, **zinc**, and **iron**, making them a nutritious addition to any meal. They support heart health, digestion, and energy levels, and they're easy to use in soups, salads, stews, and more. With their many benefits, they're a simple way to boost your health.

Calcium

Supports:

- 👉 Strong bones and teeth
- 💪 Muscle function
- 🧠 Nerve signaling
- 🩸 Blood clotting
- ⚙️ Enzyme activity

Daily Recommendation for Adults: **1000mg**

Top Plant-Based Sources

- **Fortified plant-based milk** (soy, almond, etc., 1 cup) – **300–450 mg**
- **Tofu** (firm, with calcium sulfate, ½ cup) – **350 mg**
- **Collard greens** (cooked, 1 cup) – **268 mg**
- **Kale** (cooked, 1 cup) – **177 mg**
- **Chia seeds** (2 tablespoons) – **179 mg**
- **Almonds** (1 ounce) – **76 mg**
- **Blackstrap molasses** (1 tablespoon) – **172 mg**
- **Broccoli** (cooked, 1 cup) – **62 mg**
- **Fortified orange juice** (1 cup) – **300 mg**
- **Bok choy** (cooked, 1 cup) – **158 mg**
- **Figs** (dried, 5 medium) – **68 mg**
- **Tempeh** (1 cup) – **184 mg**
- **Navy beans** (cooked, 1 cup) – **126 mg**
- **Sunflower seeds** (1 ounce) – **20 mg**
- **Tahini** (2 tablespoons) – **128 mg**
- **Sesame seeds** (1 tablespoon) – **88 mg**
- **Edamame** (cooked, 1 cup) – **98 mg**
- **Turnip greens** (cooked, 1 cup) – **197 mg**

Iron

Supports:

- ❤ Producing red blood cells
- 💨 Transporting oxygen
- ⚡ Supporting energy levels
- 🛡 Boosting immune function

Daily Recommendation:

Men and postmenopausal women: **14mg**

Women of childbearing age: **32mg**

Top Plant-Based Sources

Lentils (cooked, 1 cup) – **6.6 mg**

Spinach (cooked, 1 cup) – **6.4 mg**

Chickpeas (cooked, 1 cup) – **4.7 mg**

Tofu (firm, 1/2 cup) – **3.4 mg**

Quinoa (cooked, 1 cup) – **2.8 mg**

Pumpkin seeds (1 ounce) – **2.5 mg**

Black beans (cooked, 1 cup) – **3.6 mg**

Fortified cereals (1 serving) – **8–18 mg** (varies by brand)

Chia seeds (2 tablespoons) – **2.2 mg**

Cashews (1 ounce) – **1.9 mg**

Potatoes (baked with skin, 1 medium) – **1.9 mg**

Edamame (cooked, 1 cup) – **2.3 mg**

Swiss chard (cooked, 1 cup) – **4 mg**

Sunflower seeds (1 ounce) – **1.4 mg**

Tahini (2 tablespoons) – **2.6 mg**

Dried apricots (1/2 cup) – **1.7 mg**

Nutritional yeast (fortified, 1 tablespoon) – **2 mg**

💡 Tip: Pair these foods with vitamin C-rich options (like oranges, bell peppers, or tomatoes) to maximize absorption!

Zinc

Supports:

- ⌚ Cell division
- 🛡️ Boosting the immune system
- 💊 Aiding in wound healing

Daily Recommendation:

Men: **11 mg**

Women: **8 mg**

Top Plant-Based Sources

Pumpkin seeds (1 ounce) – **2.9 mg**

Hemp seeds (3 tablespoons) – **3 mg**

Chia seeds (2 tablespoons) – **1 mg**

Lentils (1 cup cooked) – **2.5 mg**

Chickpeas (1 cup cooked) – **2.5 mg**

Quinoa (1 cup cooked) – **2 mg**

Cashews (1 ounce) – **1.6 mg**

Tofu ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) – **1 mg**

Oats (1 cup cooked) – **2.3 mg**

Iodine

 Supports:

 Energy metabolism

 Thyroid hormone production

Daily Recommendation:

Adults: **150mcg**

Top Plant-Based Sources

Iodized salt ($\frac{3}{4}$ **teaspoon** provides ~150mcg of iodine)

Kelp tablets (**1 tablet** daily)

Dried sea vegetables:

- Nori (2-5 sheets)
- Dulse ($\frac{1}{2}$ - **1 tsp**)
- Kelp (just a **pinch**)

 Tip: Choose sea vegetables or kelp tablets for iodine if limiting sodium!

Healthy Fats for a Plant-Based Diet

Fats are important for your body—they give you energy, help your brain, and keep your heart healthy. On a plant-based diet, it's important to eat foods like nuts, seeds, avocados, and plant oils to make sure you're getting the fats your body needs.

Two types of **essential fats**—also called **fatty acids**—are especially important because your body can't make them on its own:

1. **Omega-6 fats** (for healthy skin and cells)
2. **Omega-3 fats** (for your brain, eyes, and heart)

Omega-6 Fats

How much do you need?

- Women: **12 grams a day**
- Men: **17 grams a day**

Top Plant-Based Sources

- **Sunflower oil** (1 tablespoon): **9 grams**
- **Safflower oil** (1 tablespoon): **10 grams**
- **Pumpkin seeds** (2 tablespoons): **6 grams**
- **Walnuts** (4 tablespoons): **7 grams**
- **Hemp seeds** (2 tablespoons): **7 grams**
- **Tofu** ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup): **5 grams**
- **Almonds** (3 tablespoons): **4 grams**
- **Tahini** (1 tablespoon): **4 grams**

Omega-3 Fats

How much do you need?

Women: 1 gram a day

Men: 1.6 grams a day

Top Plant-Based sources:

Flaxseeds (1 tablespoon, ground): 6 grams

Chia seeds (2 tablespoons): 5 grams

Walnuts (1 ounce, about 14 halves): 2.5 grams

Hemp seeds (1 tablespoon): 1 gram

Flaxseed oil (1 tablespoon): 7 grams

Canola oil (1 tablespoon): 1 gram

What About DHA?

DHA is an omega-3 fat essential for brain and eye health. While your body can convert some omega-3s into DHA, the amount is minimal. To ensure you're getting enough, consider taking a **vegan DHA** supplement made from algae.

How much do you need?

200–500 mg of DHA omega-3 fats

Suggested supplement:

DEVA vegan omega-3 DHA-EPA 500 mg ([click here to purchase](#))

Vitamin B12

What Is B12?

- Vitamin B12 is made by **bacteria** in soil and water.
- In the past, people and animals got B12 naturally from unwashed plants or untreated water.

Why Do We Need It Now?

- Modern farming and cleaner food systems mean there's less B12 in our diets.
- Farm animals are often given B12 supplements, so vegans can skip the middle step and take the supplement directly.

How to Get B12:

Take a B12 supplement, such as **Deva Vegan B12** ([click here to purchase on Amazon](#))

How Much to Take:

Daily Dose: 25–100 mcg per day.

Or: Take 1000 mcg 2–3 times a week.

How to Replace Dairy Milk and Half-and-Half

If you're looking for plant-based milk with nutrition similar to cow's milk, **soy milk** and **pea protein milk** are excellent choices. Both provide around 7g of protein per serving and are often fortified with calcium, vitamin D, and other essential nutrients.

Choosing the Right Plant Milk for Cooking and Baking:

Soy milk: Best for baking because its higher protein content helps baked goods brown nicely and gives them a good texture. It's also versatile and works well in savory dishes like soups and casseroles.

Oat milk: Creamy and mild, a great choice for cakes, muffins, and quick breads where a neutral flavor is key.

Almond milk: Light and slightly nutty, perfect for pancakes and waffles or for adding a subtle flavor to your dishes.

Coconut milk: Rich and flavorful, ideal for creamy desserts, curries, and soups.

Recommended Plant-Based Milk Brands:

- Silk Unsweetened Soy Milk
- Oatly Oat Milk
- Ripple Pea Milk

Half-and-Half Substitutes:

For a rich, creamy plant-based half and half, try:

- Trader Joe's Half and Half
- Silk Half and Half
- Califia Farms Half and Half
- Ripple Half and Half

Plant-Based Cheese

Store-Bought Options:

Available in shreds, slices, and blocks at most grocery stores.

Recommended brands:

- Miyoko's Creamery
- Follow your heart
- Violife
- Daiya

Homemade Options:

- **Nutritional Yeast**: adds a cheesy flavor to dishes.
- **Vegan Crema Fresca** – This Healthy Kitchen - [click for recipe](#)
- **Vegan Cheese Sauce** – Love and Lemons - [click for recipe](#)
- **Cashew Ricotta** – Simple Veganista - [click for recipe](#)
- **Tofu Ricotta** – Simple Veganista- [click for recipe](#)

Plant-Based Yogurt, Heavy Cream and Ice Cream

Recommended plant-based ice cream brands:

- Nada Moo
- Ben & Jerry's (*Non-Dairy Flavors*)
- So Delicious
- Trader Joe's

Recommended plant-based yogurt brands:

- Kite Hill (*Greek Style or Almond Milk Yogurt*)
- Sprouts Grocery (*Coconut-Based Yogurt*)
- Silk (*Soy-Based Yogurt*)
- Siggis (*Coconut Blend Yogurt*)
- Cocojune (*Cultured Coconut Yogurt*)
- So Delicious (*Coconut Milk Yogurt*)

Heavy Cream Replacements:

Store-Bought Options:

- Country Crock Plant Cream
- Califia Farms Heavy Whip
- Silk Whipping Cream

DIY Options:

Non-Dairy Milk & Oil: Blend 2/3 cup non-dairy milk with 1/3 cup oil.

Non-Dairy Milk & Vegan Butter: Blend 2/3 cup non-dairy milk with 1/3 cup melted vegan butter.

Cashew Cream—Minimalist Baker ([click here for recipe](#))

Common Vegan Egg Replacements

There are many ways to replace eggs in a vegan diet. This guide highlights options for both cooking and baking, along with substitution ratios.

Chickpea Flour

- **Uses:** Cookies, quick breads, muffins, French toast
- **Substitution:** 3 tbsp flour + 3 tbsp water = 1 egg

Silken Tofu

- **Uses:** Brownies, custards, cheesecake
- **Substitution:** 1/4 cup = 1 egg

Bananas

- **Uses:** Quick breads, muffins, pancakes
- **Substitution:** 1/4 cup purée = 1 egg

Applesauce

- **Uses:** Quick breads, muffins, cakes
- **Substitution:** 1/4 cup purée = 1 egg

Flaxseed Meal

- **Uses:** Cookies, brownies, pancakes
- **Substitution:** 1 tbsp meal + 2.5 tbsp water = 1 egg

Aquafaba

What is it?: Liquid from canned chickpeas

Best For:

- Meringues
- Cakes, quick breads, cookies and brownies
- Pancakes and waffles
- Vegan mayonnaise
- Dips and sauces

Substitutions:

1 tbsp = 1 egg yolk

2 tbsp = 1 egg white

3 tbsp = 1 whole egg

How to Use: Whisk for 45–60 seconds until foamy.

Specialty Vegan Egg Replacements

Just Egg

- **What is it?**: Plant-based egg substitute made from mung beans
- **Forms**: Liquid and folded

Liquid Just Egg

- **Uses**: Scrambles, frittatas, casseroles, omelets, French toast, pancakes, crepes, breads
- **Substitution**: 3 tbsp liquid = 1 egg
- **Nutrition**: 5g protein per serving

Folded Just Egg (*find in frozen aisle*)

- **Uses**: Breakfast sandwiches, fried rice, bowls
- Found in the freezer section
- **Nutrition**: 6g protein per serving

Bob's Red Mill Egg Replacer

- **What is it?**: Gluten-free powdered egg replacement
- **Uses**: Muffins, cakes, cookies, quick breads
- **How to Use**: Mix with water, let sit for 1 minute to thicken.

Substitutions:

- 1 tbsp replacer + 2 tbsp water = 1 egg
- 1 1/2 tsp replacer + 2 tbsp water = 1 egg white
- 1 1/2 tsp replacer + 1 tbsp water = 1 egg yolk

Recommended Plant-Based Recipe Resources

Explore a variety of vegan food bloggers, each offering unique recipes, tips, and inspiration for plant-based cooking.

Cheap Lazy Vegan

www.cheaplazyvegan.com



Plant Based Brandon ([youtube](#))



Rainbow Plant Life

www.rainbowplantlife.com



Plant You

www.plantyou.com



Make It Dairy Free

www.makeitdairyfree.com



The Hidden Veggies

www.thehiddenveggies.com



Derek Sarno ([youtube](#))



Healthy Little Vittles (Gluten-Free)

<https://healthylittlevittles.com/>

