**Recommended Food Groups for Vegans**

A vegan diet excludes all animal products, including dairy and eggs. Over the past 7 decades, the United States Department of Agriculture has set forth guidelines for a healthy diet. Since these guidelines usually incorporate animal products, there has been a need for vegan-specific recommendations. Thus, all essential foods have been narrowed down into these four Vegan Food Groups, as recommended by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM).

1. **Fruit**

Recommended at 3 or more servings a day, fruits are packed with fiber, vitamin C and beta-carotene. At least one of the servings ought to be rich in Vitamin C, examples of which are citrus fruits, melons and strawberries.

1. **Legumes**

Two or more servings a day are recommended. They include beans, lentils, chickpeas, soymilk and peas. Legumes are a rich source of fiber, protein, potassium, folate, iron, calcium, zinc and B Vitamins. This group provides the body with energy and consequently, helps to prevent lethargy. Unlike meat as a source of protein, legumes do not have any saturated fats or cholesterol.

1. **Whole Grains**

The recommended intake is 5 or more servings a day. This group is not only restricted to the grain itself, but also extends to their products. Grains include rice, corn, barley and millet; while their products incorporate whole-grain bread, pasta, tortillas and cereal. These provide protein, zinc and B vitamins, in addition to containing complex carbohydrates which the body converts into energy.

1. **Vegetables**

The recommended intake is 4 or more servings a day. The benefits of eating vegetables have long been heralded, with the USDA recommending their inclusion in every meal. They provide the body with Vitamins A and C, in addition to providing nutritional value in the form of iron, riboflavin and calcium. To optimize these benefits, dark-green leafy vegetables are recommended in the form of broccoli, kale, turnip greens, chicory and cabbage. Moreover, dark-yellow and orange vegetables are rich in beta-carotene. Good sources for this include carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkin and winter squash. Vegetables are also a great antioxidant.