

Important Non-Meat Sources Of Protein For Vegetarians

Although most vegetarians consume a considerable amount of protein, they often do not absorb as much as they would on a nonvegetarian diet. This is because plant proteins are considerably less digestible than animal proteins, which contain amino acid chains that are closer or identical to human amino acid chains.

Consuming animal proteins might yield close to a 1:1 absorption ratio, while consuming plant proteins, such as wheat, might only yield 50% of the amino acids needed to build a "complete protein" or a protein that can readily be assimilated into the human body.

In order for vegetarians to absorb a healthy amount of protein, they must consume a variety of plant proteins to form complete amino chains. By eating vegetables, legumes, seeds, nuts, fruits, and whole grains, vegetarians can increase the amount of complete proteins they create by combining a number of varieties of amino acid chains.

Vegetarians must also consume more foods that contain proteins because plant proteins are generally harder to digest. While a nutritional label may suggest that pasta has 5 grams of protein per serving; you may only be able to digest 2-3 grams of that protein, which means you must complement the pasta with other sources of protein.

In addition to natural sources of protein, vegetarians should also seek foods that are "protein-fortified"--or artificially-infused with protein.

For example, many supermarkets offer a variety "protein-fortified" pasta and bread. I have seen pasta that contains as much as 12 grams of protein per serving.

Soy milk is also a good source of protein for vegetarians. Studies on isolated soy protein show that it can be absorbed nearly as well as animal proteins, yielding close to a 1:1 protein absorption ratio.

For non-vegan vegetarians, yogurt, milk, and eggs (which contain complete proteins) are all excellent sources of protein.

As a vegetarian you have a number of options to boost your protein intake - and you should consider

taking advantage of all of them. You should diversify your food selections, drink more soy products, and eat "protein-fortified" breads and pasta.