

Catering for Vegan Inpatients

By Dietitian Heather Russell



The lowdown on vegan nutrition

Getting the balance right

Well-planned vegan diets can meet nutritional needs during every stage of life. The following advice is based on the UK's Eatwell Guide:

Food group	Suggested intake
Fruit and vegetables (fresh, tinned, frozen or dried), including orange varieties and leafy greens	At least 5 x 80g portions per day (30g for dried fruit)
Starchy foods – ideally higher fibre choices, such as oats, sweet potato, wholemeal bread, wholewheat pasta and brown rice	Every meal
Protein-rich foods, such as beans, lentils, chickpeas, tofu, soya alternatives to milk and yoghurt and peanuts	Most meals
Nuts and seeds, especially those rich in omega-3 fat, such as walnuts, ground linseed, hemp seeds and chia seeds	Daily
Calcium-rich foods, such as fortified foods and calcium-set tofu	Examples: 400ml of fortified plant milk provides about $\frac{2}{3}$ recommended daily intake for adults. 100g of calcium-set tofu (uncooked weight) might provide $\frac{1}{2}$.

Nutrients that deserve special attention

It is recommended that everyone in the UK uses a vitamin D supplement during autumn and winter as a minimum. Vegans also need to ensure reliable intakes of vitamin B12, iodine and selenium. Take a look at the table below for more information:

Nutrient	Suggestions
Vitamin B12	Eat fortified foods at least twice a day providing a total of at least 3mcg (micrograms), use a daily supplement containing at least 10mcg, or use a weekly supplement containing at least 2000mcg
Vitamin D	Supplement during autumn and winter (all year if you do not regularly expose your skin to sunlight or you have darker skin). Vitamin D3 from lichen and vitamin D2 are vegan-friendly. Recommended dose is 10mcg per day.
Iodine	Arguably, a supplement is the best option. Recommended intake for adults is 140mcg per day.
Selenium	Eat a couple of Brazil nuts daily or supplement. Recommended daily intakes for adults are 60-75mcg.

Understanding vegan needs

The definition of veganism

Vegans avoid the use of non-human animals as far as is possible and practicable. A vegan diet excludes all animal products, including meat, fish, milk, eggs and honey. Someone who follows a vegan lifestyle will seek to use products that do not contain animal ingredients, and have not been tested on animals.

Why vegan?

- It helps animals
- It reduces your impact on the environment
- Well-planned vegan diets support excellent health
- It reduces the demand for feeding crops to non-human animals

Protected beliefs

- Freedom of thought, belief and conscience is protected by human rights legislation
- Nutritional care should be provided in a way that respects equality and diversity

"When a person has specific dietary requirements relating to moral or ethical beliefs, such as vegetarianism, these requirements must be fully considered and met. Every effort should be made to meet people's preferences..." (Care Quality Commission)

Benefits of vegan-friendly hospital catering

- Did you know that vegan options are suitable for most people? They can be enjoyed by the following groups:
 - Vegans, vegetarians and people who eat meat and fish
 - Those trying to limit their consumption of animal products
 - People with allergies to milk and/or eggs (if free from these allergens)
 - Vegan meals may be acceptable to people who eat Kosher or Halal food (discuss with service user)
- Did you know that research has associated vegan diets with the lowest emissions of carbon dioxide? A strong vegan offering helps to make your catering service sustainable.
- Vegan options tend to be higher in fibre and lower in saturated fat, and are, therefore, particularly valuable for service users, staff and visitors who are nutritionally well

Tips for caterers

- Ensure that your service offers vegan meals, and try to provide choices
- Ensure that vegan spread and fortified plant milk are available
- Make vegan options as easy to access as possible. Consider displaying them on the main menu.
- Provide vegan options suitable for people who are nutritionally vulnerable. Vegan sausages, creamy sauces, pastry, dumplings, soya mince, puddings and soya custard can help to boost calories and protein (see below for more ideas).
- It's a great idea to provide staff training about vegan nutrition

Healthy eating options

		Approx. calories	Approx. protein (g)
Breakfast	2 wheat biscuits with soya milk, wholemeal toast with milk-free spread, orange juice cuplet	348	11
Lunch	Minestrone soup & roll with milk-free spread, bean casserole with potato wedges & vegetables, soya yoghurt	663	22
Evening meal	Vegetable goulash with herb dumplings, mashed potato & broccoli, roll with milk-free spread, soya yoghurt, orange juice cuplet	690	26
Extras	200ml soya milk in tea/coffee, banana	173	8
		1874	67

Higher calorie and protein options

		Approx. calories	Approx. protein (g)
Breakfast	2 wheat biscuits with soya milk, wholemeal toast with milk-free spread & baked beans, orange juice cuplet	415	15
Lunch	Minestrone soup & roll with milk-free spread, bean casserole with potato wedges & vegetables, apple pie with soya custard	909	24
Evening meal	Soya mince pie with mashed potato & broccoli, roll with milk-free spread, fruit crumble with soya custard, orange juice cuplet	997	27
Snacks & drinks	3 bourbon biscuits, 2 wheat biscuits with soya milk, 400ml soya milk	569	23
		2890	90