

Being a Vegetarian Comes with Benefits



Have you considered eliminating meat from your diet? If so, you're not alone: According to a Harris Interactive poll, up to 8 million U.S. adults refrain from eating meat, fish or poultry. Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey wants to help our members get the information they need, when they need it. Here are some things to know before moving to a plant-based diet.

Health Benefits

Whether you're considering becoming vegetarian for an environmental, health or other reason, there are plenty of potential benefits to embracing a balanced plant-based diet, including lower cholesterol, blood pressure and body mass index.

Research also shows that vegetarians tend to have a lower risk of chronic illnesses, including heart disease, colorectal cancer and type 2 diabetes.

Watch How You Replace

However, you won't see the benefits of a vegetarian diet if you replace meat with high-calorie, high-fat options, such as soda, cookies and french fries. You will need to get nutrients from fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and healthy fats, which are in nuts, olive oil and avocado.

If your goal is weight loss, be aware that taking in too many calories, even of healthier food, can contribute to weight gain.

You also will need to get vitamin B in your diet to prevent anemia and even blindness. This vitamin only occurs naturally in animal products. Children younger than five, including those in utero, require sufficient vitamin B for neurological development.

You can get vitamin B through supplements and foods fortified with it, as tofu usually is. If you're concerned about getting enough necessary nutrients, talk with a nutritionist.

Getting Started

If you're interested in a vegetarian diet, but aren't sure that it's right for you, you can start by:

- Choosing a meatless option when dining out
- Replacing meat with meat substitutes to create a comparable meal, such as using black bean burgers instead of hamburgers
- Replacing meat-based dishes with new and different fruit- and vegetable-based ones

Always talk with your doctor before making any changes to your diet.



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Sources: Harvard Health, WebMD®

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The information is general in nature and is intended to provide you with an overview of the wellness topic to help you and your family get and stay healthy. It is not intended as a substitute for the professional advice and care of your doctor. If you have any questions or concerns about your health or the health of any of your family members, consult your doctor.

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