Myth #3: Vegetarians/Vegans Cannot Eat Enough Iron

Surveys of vegetarians/vegans have found that iron deficiency is no more common among vegetarians/vegans than among the general population. There are several reasons why it is easy for a vegetarian/vegan to get enough iron:

1. Many commonly eaten foods are high in iron: dark leafy greens (kale, collards, bok choy), beans, tofu, tempeh, black strap molasses, quinoa, tahini, fortified cereals, etc.

2. Vegan diets are high in vitamin C, which greatly increases absorption of iron. Adding a vitamin C-rich food, such as tomatoes, bell peppers, or citrus fruit, to a meal increases iron absorption sixfold.

3. Many combinations of commonly eaten foods, such as beans and tomato sauce or stir-fried tofu and broccoli, are high in both vitamin C and iron. Broccoli and bok choy are foods high in both vitamin C and iron independent of other food combinations.
Myth #4: The Only Rich Sources of Calcium for Bone Health are Dairy Products

Calcium needs can easily be met on plant-based diets because of the many calcium-rich plant foods available. Plant foods may provide additional benefits for bone health since they can be good sources of other compounds believed to affect bone health. Diets that are higher in fruits and vegetables, and lower in animal protein and dairy may promote bone health. Other factors that contribute to good bone health include exercise and vitamin D intake.

Other factors that contribute to poor bone health include high sodium intake, extreme weight loss, alcohol, and smoking.

Naturally calcium-rich foods include: leafy green vegetables (collards, kale, mustard and turnip greens), broccoli, bok choy, calcium-set tofu, almonds, and blackstrap molasses. Calcium-fortified foods include: certain brands of juices (apple, orange, and vegetable juice blends), breakfast cereals, protein bars, margarine, and non-dairy soy, rice or almond beverages.

Myth #5: Vegan Diets Do Not Include Many Food Choices

Typically people following a vegan diet have much more variety in their diet because of the many new foods to which they are exposed. Almost all food items can easily be made vegan (e.g. vegan cheese, cheesecake, cookies, pizza, milkshakes, casseroles, burgers, Italian food, milk, yogurt, etc.).

A vegan diet is typically rich in whole grains and grain products (brown rice, millet, barley, oats, whole wheat bread), a variety of fruits and vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes (lentils, chickpeas, kidney beans, adzuki beans), soy foods (tofu, tempeh, miso), seitan, etc.

Myth #6: Eating Soy Increases Risk of Cancer

Soy is a good source of nutrients that has many health benefits. Studies show that eating soyfoods early in life decreases risk of breast cancer in adults. Studies suggests that children and/or teens who consume as little as one serving of soy daily decrease their risk of breast cancer later in life by 25 to 50 percent. Soy has been found to be helpful for other conditions. Soy may be helpful in reducing heart disease risk, relieving hot flashes, preventing/treating prostate cancer, and promoting bone health for postmenopausal women.

For more information about any of the topics above, please see one of our free resources at: http://vegetariannutrition.net/faq/

A registered dietitian can help you develop a healthy vegetarian eating plan that meets your needs. To find an RD in your area, visit www.eatright.org.

For More Information On Vegetarian/Vegan Nutrition Go To:


http://www.vrg.org/nutrition

Becoming Vegan, by Brenda Davis & Vesanto Melina

Vegan for Life, by Jack Norris & Virginia Messina

Position of the American Dietetic Association: Vegetarian Diets, by Winston J Craig & Ann Reed Mangels