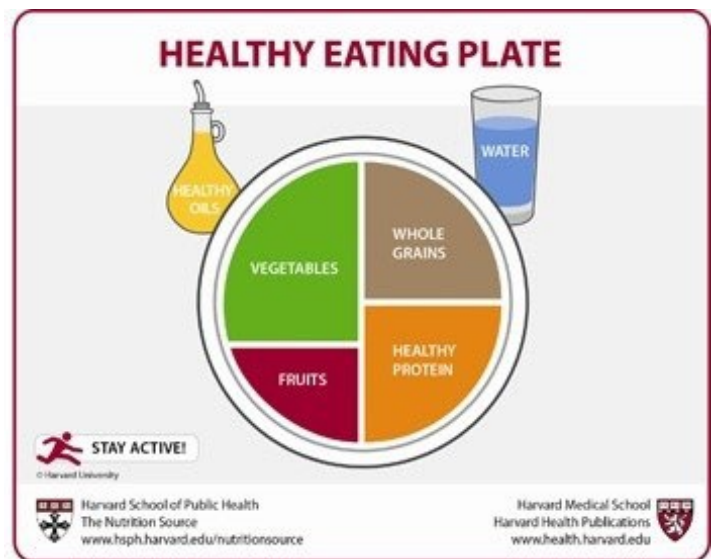


### WHAT IS A PLANT-BASED DIET?

Following a plant-based diet can be beneficial for your whole body. It can help to reduce the risk of chronic disease, like heart disease, diabetes, and cancer to name a few; provide nutrients that promote brain health; and contribute to weight loss. By consuming whole, plant-based foods, your diet will naturally be higher in fiber, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals, and lower in saturated fat and cholesterol. Whole foods are those that are consumed in a manner close to their natural state, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, like brown rice and quinoa, nuts, seeds, and legumes. While you may choose to follow a strict plant-based diet, you may also choose to include some animal-based foods such as dairy, fish, eggs or even small amounts of meat or poultry if you choose. A plant-based diet does not need to be 100% animal free to provide health benefits, but plant-based foods should be the center of each meal.

### On a plant-based diet, you can still follow the Healthy Eating Plate guidelines.

- Fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables – aim for a variety of colors.
- Fill the other half with plant-based proteins (see below for a list of options) and whole grains. Limit refined grains like white rice and white bread.
- Make sure to include healthy fats like those in olive oil, avocado, nuts and seeds. Avoid butter, margarine, and other trans fats.
- Drink at least 8 glasses of water each day. Limit fruit juices to 4 ounces per day and avoid sugar sweetened beverages.
- Avoid fast and processed foods like packaged cakes, cookies, chips, and sugary cereals.



Copyright © 2011, Harvard University. For more information about The Healthy Eating Plate, please see The Nutrition Source, Department of Nutrition, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, [www.thenutritionsource.org](http://www.thenutritionsource.org), and Harvard Health Publications, [www.health.harvard.edu](http://www.health.harvard.edu).

### TIPS FOR TRANSITIONING TO A PLANT-BASED DIET

Transitioning to a plant-based diet does not need to happen overnight! Like any habits, changing eating patterns can be challenging and should occur gradually. Begin by removing the foods you will miss the least. Make easy changes like swapping out cow's milk for a non-dairy alternative.

You can also start with one meatless meal per week. Try substituting plant-based proteins into your favorite dishes and explore new recipes for different ways of cooking them. Stock your pantry and refrigerator with whole plant-based foods to prevent slipping into old habits. Prepare healthy snacks when you have time so they are readily accessible when needed and you are on the go.

### PROTEIN: HOW CAN I GET IT AND HOW MUCH DO I NEED?

You don't need to consume animal products to obtain adequate amounts of protein in your diet. Many plant-based foods you already eat contain protein. Some examples include:

**Soy Foods:** tofu, tempeh, edamame

**Fortified non-dairy milks** like almond or soy

**Grains:** brown & wild rice, oatmeal, quinoa, couscous, farro, barley, whole grain bread & pasta

**Vegetables:** green peas, broccoli, spinach, asparagus, brussels sprouts

**Nuts and nut butters,** seeds, legumes, seitan, nutritional yeast

### TIPS FOR ADDING PROTEIN TO MEALS & SNACKS

- Yogurt or oatmeal mix-ins: chia seeds, flaxseeds, toasted almonds, walnuts, or pecans
- Dip veggies into hummus, spread nut butter onto celery
- Salad toppers: almonds, walnuts, pecans, sunflower seeds, pepitas, chickpeas, lentils, edamame, farro, quinoa, grilled tofu or tempeh
- Try chickpea pasta (available at supermarkets)
- Create your own trail mix with your favorite nuts, seeds and dried fruit. Try adding roasted edamame! Grab a handful on the go
- Add legumes and whole grains to soups, stews, and chilis
- Use nutritional yeast to provide a cheesy flavor in sauces, sprinkle on top of popcorn or roasted veggies, mix into soups or stews

### PROTEIN CALCULATOR

**Protein is crucial for maintaining the structure and function of all tissues and organs in our body. The average adult needs protein in the amount of 0.8-1g per kg of body weight each day. Older adults should aim for 1-1.2g/kg daily.**

**To determine your own protein needs, perform the following steps:**

1. Divide your weight in pounds by 2.2
2. If you are **under 65**, multiply this number by 0.8-1. If you are **65 or older**, multiply this number by 1-1.2
  - a. Ex: a 140 lb individual, 35 years old |  $140/2.2 = 63.3\text{kg} \times 0.8-1 = 51-63\text{g protein/day}$
  - b. Ex: a 140 lb individual, 70 years old |  $140/2.2 = 63.3\text{kg} \times 1-1.2 = 63-76\text{g protein/day}$

Tofu: ½ cup = 10g protein  
Soymilk: 1 cup = 8g protein  
Oatmeal: 1 cup cooked = 6g protein  
Quinoa: 1 cup cooked = 8g protein  
Green peas: ½ cup = 4g protein  
Brussels sprouts: 1 cup cooked = 4g protein

Broccoli: 1 cup cooked = 4g protein  
Almond and peanut butter: 2 tbsp = 7g protein  
Lentils: 1/2 cup cooked = 9g protein  
Chickpeas: 1/2 cup cooked = 7g protein  
Chia seeds: 1 tbsp = 3g protein  
Nutritional yeast: 1 tbsp = 5g protein

### KEY NUTRIENTS TO FOCUS ON

By consuming a diet limited in animal-based foods, there are a few key nutrients that need extra attention.

**Iron:** Helps transport oxygen in the blood to our muscles. Found in iron-fortified breakfast cereals like Grape Nuts and Total, spinach and swiss chard (especially cooked), bok choy, almonds, pistachios, quinoa, oatmeal, tofu, tempeh, soymilk, dried figs, and raisins.

**Quick tips to improve absorption:** Consume with a source of vitamin C (oranges, strawberries, kale, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, bell peppers, cauliflower), drink coffee and tea between meals rather than with them, take Calcium supplements separately from meals.

**Calcium:** Helps maintain strong bones and teeth. Non-dairy sources include calcium-fortified soymilk, almond milk and orange juice, oranges, dark leafy greens such as collard greens and kale, broccoli, tofu set in calcium (check the ingredients list), tempeh, edamame, bok choy, black beans, almonds and almond butter, dried figs, and chia seeds.

**Quick tips to improve absorption:** When drinking calcium fortified non-dairy milks, make sure to shake the container as the calcium often settles.



**Zinc:** Promotes wound healing and a healthy immune system. Sources include fermented foods like tofu, tempeh and miso, oatmeal, black beans, peas, lentils, chickpeas, pumpkin seeds, cashews, and walnuts. If you choose to consume eggs or fish, these are rich sources as well.

**Quick tips to improve absorption:** Go for sprouted beans, grains, and seeds. You can purchase sprouted breads like Ezekiel as well as sprouted beans and seeds, or sprout your own!



**Vitamin D:** Aids in calcium absorption and bone health. Found in fortified soymilk, almond milk and orange juice, wild mushrooms and mushrooms exposed to UV light (check the Nutrition Facts Label for Vitamin D content), fortified cereals, and sunshine! If you eat eggs, egg yolks are a rich source.

**Vitamin B12:** Involved in the formation of red blood cells and helps maintain normal functioning of the brain and nervous system. Found in fortified foods like cereals, nutritional yeast, soymilk, kombucha, tofu, and meat alternatives. As not all products are fortified, be sure to check the Nutrition Facts Label. If you eat eggs, fish, milk, or cheese, these are natural sources of vitamin B12.