

NOURISHING DAIRY-FREE OR VEGAN DIET

This information leaflet is for those who are following a dairy-free or vegan diet and are underweight, lost weight or have a poor appetite. Use this leaflet as a guide to adapt your dairy-free or vegan diet.

If you have a poor appetite it is best to aim to meet your nutritional needs through ordinary food and fluids. We call this a 'food first' approach and this includes:

- Food fortification.
- Snacks in-between meals.
- Regular nourishing drinks.
- Choosing high calorie and high protein foods and fluids.

Mealtime Tips

- Have regular smaller meals throughout the day.
- Have nourishing snacks and drinks in-between meals.
- Always try to have full-fat/ sugar versions of foods. If you have diabetes please speak to your dietitian for advice.
- Do not fill up on low energy, filling foods like fruit and vegetables unless they are served with vegan cream/ice-cream or vegan-cheese sauces.
- Ensure where you are eating is calm and peaceful.
- Do not overfill a plate at mealtimes but try a smaller portion and plate.
- Make foods look attractive by presenting them in an appetising way. Garnish with parsley, lemon or tomatoes.
- Sharp tasting foods are refreshing e.g. fruit juices, lemon squash or boiled sweets.

Social Tips

- Eating in company often helps to improve your appetite. Try sharing mealtimes with a friend, family member or neighbour if able.
- Try not to eat lying in bed. Eating upright at a dining table may help you manage more of your meal.
- Try to get out into some fresh air.
- If you smoke, try not to smoke in the half an hour before your meal.
- Keep your mouth and teeth clean as this can help you to enjoy your foods.

FOOD FORTIFICATION

Food fortification will increase the calorie and protein content of the diet. This will not increase the portion size but will help you meet your nutritional needs.

Matchbox size of hard vegan 'cheese' (30g) adds an extra 80-95 calories

- Grate in with mashed potatoes, soup or baked beans
- Melt on toast
- Add to white sauces (made with milk-alternatives)
- Add grated to a potato topping



2 teaspoons of dairy-free spread (10g) adds an extra 50-60 calories

- Add to potatoes or vegetables
- Spread thickly on bread or toast
- Add on pasta or spaghetti or rice



1 heaped teaspoon (6g) of sugar adds an extra 25 calories

- Add to breakfast cereals
- Add into drinks e.g. tea, coffee, smoothies, dairy-free shakes
- Add to puddings e.g. soya puddings, dairy-free puddings



1 tablespoon (15mls) of oat cream adds an extra ~22calories. 1 tablespoon (15mls) of soya cream adds an extra ~25calories

- Add to mashed potato, soup, dahl
- Add to dairy-free puddings/ yoghurts or with fruit
- Add into milk-alternative based drinks e.g. coffee, tea, vegan hot chocolate, smoothies or dairy-free shakes
- Add to breakfast cereals



1 teaspoon (5g) of pea protein powder adds an extra 18-20 calories and ~4g protein*

- Add to 200mls of full fat milk-alternative and use in sauces, soups, drinks, puddings, porridge and breakfast cereals
- Add into dairy-free yoghurt



Milk-Alternative: soya, oat, nut, coconut, pea or rice milk. Ideally choose a calcium, vitamin B12 and iodine enriched option.

Fortified Milk: Add 3-4 tablespoons (15g-20g) of pea protein powder to 1 pint of your chosen milk-alternative. Whisk until dissolved. This can then be kept in the fridge to be used throughout the day.

FOOD FORTIFICATION (Continued)

1 tablespoon (55g) of coconut/ soya yoghurt adds an extra ~30-70 calories and ~0.5g protein (these vary so check the packet)

- Add to breakfast cereals
- Use to make dairy-free shakes and smoothies
- Add to desserts
- Add in curries, dahl or sauces
- Eat on its own



1 heaped teaspoon (17g) of maple syrup adds an extra 45 calories

- Add onto desserts, soya puddings, dairy-free sponges
- Add into breakfast cereals or porridge
- Add to drinks to sweeten



1 heaped teaspoon (18g) of jam adds an extra 45 calories

- Add to bread or toast
- Add to porridge oats
- Add to puddings e.g. soya puddings, dairy-free sponges



1 tablespoon (15mls) of cooking oil e.g. olive, vegetable, sunflower adds an extra 135 calories

- Add to stews, curries, dahls, soups or on roasted vegetables
- Fry or roast foods instead of grilling or baking e.g. potatoes, meat-alternatives or vegetables
- Add an oil based dressing to salads



1 tablespoon (15g) of peanut butter adds an extra 92 calories and 4g protein

- Spread on toast or bread
- Add to breakfast cereals or porridge
- Add to dairy-free yoghurt or puddings
- Add into dairy-free shakes or smoothies



1 tablespoon ground almonds adds an extra 60kcal, 2g protein

- Add to cereals or porridge
- Add to dairy-free yoghurts and desserts
- Add to soups or main meals

Other additions may include; golden syrup, hummus, nuts and seeds

BREAKFAST MEAL IDEAS

Creamy Porridge

- 25g porridge oats
- 100mls fortified milk-alternative
- 1 tablespoon vegan single cream
- 1 heaped teaspoon sugar



Scrambled Tofu

- 140g extra firm tofu
- 1 teaspoon dairy-free spread
- 1 tablespoon fortified milk-alternative
- 1 tablespoon soya/ oat/ coconut cream



Yoghurt and Golden Syrup

- 125g pot of soya/ coconut yoghurt
- 1 heaped teaspoon of golden syrup
- 1 handful of chopped mixed nuts
(you could also add fruit as well)



Cheesy Beans on Toast

- 135g baked beans (1/3rd of a large tin)
- 30g of vegan cheese
- 1 medium slice of toast
- 10g dairy-free spread



Other Breakfast Ideas Include:

- Toast with either butter and peanut butter (or other nut butters, marmite, dairy-free cheese spread, syrup)
- Breakfast cereals made with fortified milk-alternative (try cereal which contain nuts to increase the energy) (note: check if any vitamin D added is not from animals)
- A vegan cooked breakfast (including, scrambled tofu, vegan meat-alternatives, baked beans)
- Fruit juice- sweetened
- Fruit smoothie made with milk-alternatives
- Vegan cakes/ muffins



LIGHT MEAL IDEAS

Remember to always try to include a source of protein at each meal time e.g. beans, lentils, chickpeas, soya protein, vegan quorn, tofu, nut butter.

Toast with either:

- Nut butters
- Coconut/ soya cheese (30g)
- Baked beans
- Scrambled tofu
- Pasta/ spaghetti in tomato sauce and vegan cheese

Sandwiches with a choice of fillings:

- Vegan meat-alternatives (eg. vegan chicken pieces, sausages/ bacon)
- Dairy-free alternative cheese (soft or hard cheese)
- Hummus
- Falafel
- Peanut butter (smooth or crunchy)
- Jam/ chocolate spread (although this will not provide any protein)



All These Snacks Provide Extra Calories:

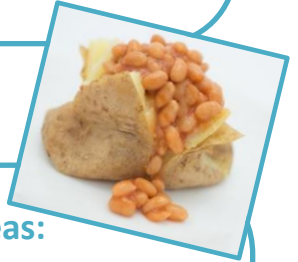
- Vegan puddings
- Check biscuit labels- some are vegan
- Slice of vegan cake
- Vegan ice cream (e.g. soya)
- Vegan cereal/ nut bars
- Vegan jelly made with milk-alternatives
- Toast or rice cakes with nut butter/ hazelnut spread
- Nut butter and jam on toast
- Glass of fruit juice or milk-alternative
- Vegan crackers and dips eg. hummus, guacamole, tahini
- Cubes of dairy-free cheese/ soft dairy-free cheese and crackers
- Crisps
- Nuts/ seeds/ dried fruit
- Vegan filled pastries
- Vegetable Bhaji, samosa or pakora
- Chips



Jacket Potato with a choice of fillings:

- Vegan cheese
- Baked beans
- Lentils/ Dhal
- Coleslaw made with vegan mayonnaise
- Vegan Spread
- Vegan Quorn/ Soya Protein Chilli

Add vegan spread, olive oil, vegan mayonnaise or nut butter to increase the calories and taste



Main Meal Ideas:

- Lentil/ chickpea/ Tofu and vegetable curry
- Pasta bake with beans/ vegan cheeses
- Lentil stews (could be topped with potatoes to make a vegan pie)
- Vegan sausage and bean casserole
- Vegan quorn chicken pieces in a vegan cream sauce
- Spaghetti bolognese/ chilli (made with soya protein/ vegan quorn) topped with vegan cheese

More Light Meal Ideas:

- Cauliflower and vegan cheese
- Falafel
- Vegan sausages, veggie fingers/ burgers (eg. tofu or bean) with baked beans
- Pasta and vegan cheese
- Soups - add soya/ oat/ coconut cream, vegan cheese or pea powder and serve with dairy-free croutons/ bread and vegan spread/ oil
- Dahl with vegan cream
- Vegan (bean or tofu) burgers/ sausages



NOURISHING DRINK IDEAS

In addition to balanced meals and food fortification, these drinks may be useful for those who require extra protein and calories.

Milkshake (155kcal, 9g protein)



- 150ml milk-alternative
- 1 teaspoon (5g) of pea protein powder
- 1 scoop dairy-free ice cream

Flavourings which may also add extra nutrition e.g. fresh fruit, vanilla extract, vegan chocolate power.

Add the pea protein powder to the milk and whisk to mix thoroughly. Mix in the ice cream and flavourings (may need to be blended or left to soften so that it can be mixed easily)

Fruit Drink (200kcal)

- 100ml fruit juice
- 100ml lemonade (non diet variety)
- 1 scoop of sorbet
- 1 tablespoon of sugar



Blend all the ingredients together until smooth

Hot Chocolate (120kcal, 11g protein)

- 200ml milk-alternative
- 1 teaspoon (5g) of pea protein powder
- 1 teaspoon of vegan hot chocolate shots
- Sugar to taste (will add calories)

Warm the milk. Add the pea protein powder, the vegan chocolate powder, sugar and mix together.

Mix the ingredients together and blend until smooth

*calories calculated using plain soya milk as the milk alternative



Fruit Yoghurt Drink (270kcal, 14g protein)



- 1 pot soya fruit yoghurt
- 140ml milk-alternative
- 1 teaspoon (5g) of pea protein powder
- 2 heaped teaspoons of maple syrup

Mix the ingredients together and blend until smooth

Also try coffee made with fortified milk-alternatives, fresh fruit juice or milk-alternatives on their own. These drinks provide more energy and protein than teas and coffees made with water or cordial/ squash.

Adapted with permission from Leicestershire Nutrition and Dietetic Services

Produced by Nutrition and Clinical Dietetic Department, NHS Fife October 2022 Review October 2025

