

BECOME A FLEXITARIAN

This easy-to-follow four-week plan will have you eating less meat and more veggies—and loving it!



When it comes to eating for better health, you can better choose vegetables over meat. However, it can be difficult sometimes to say no to a juicy steak or a slice of roast chicken. These tips will help you eat less meat and love your veggies.

More nutrition and health experts advise us to implement a flexitarian diet. This eating plan recommends that about half (or more) of your meals each week is built around vegetables and plant-based proteins. Since you're eating more vegetables and whole grains, you're getting more fiber, which is something lacking in many diets.

There are plenty of reasons to decide to eat flexitarian. You'll lower your risk of hypertension, improve your cholesterol levels, and gain greater protection against cancer and type-2 diabetes. Moreover, there is the weight factor: Studies show that people who eat a plant-based diet weigh less than meat eaters.

Are you ready? We have a simple four-week plan for you. We bet you'll want more vegetables every day!

WEEK 1

GET THE PERFECT BLEND

Meat, chicken and fish may be your go-to proteins, but there's a wide world of muscle-building foods to try. This week is all about expanding your palate and trying new ingredients.

GOAL: Decrease portion sizes of animal proteins

The beauty of a flexitarian lifestyle is that it's not all or nothing. So, if you can't quite wrap your taste buds around, say, a bean-only taco, this week try using half the ground beef you'd normally use and round out the filling with black beans. Also make stir-fries and casseroles primarily with vegetables and use meat as the garnish. Here is a snapshot of vegetarian proteins to work into your meal planning.

VEGETARIAN PROTEINS



Beans

100 g cooked black beans
8 grams protein



Dairy products

(cheese, milk, yogurt)
100 g Greek yogurt 0% fat
10 grams protein



Eggs

1 egg (large)
6 grams protein



Grains

(try barley, farrow, quinoa)
100 g cooked quinoa
4.4 grams protein



Nuts & Seeds

30 g peanut butter
6 grams protein



Tofu

(available in a variety of textures)
100 g
11 grams protein

WEEK 2

TRY FOR 5

This week we're challenging you to forgo meat for a handful of meals. By gradually pulling back the frequency with which you eat meat, you'll give your taste buds time to adapt as you reach a level that feels comfortable to you.

GOAL: Eat 5 meatless meals

If it doesn't really make you happy, try one of these delicious, simple meal ideas.

BREAKFAST

- Mindful breakfast bowl
oatmeal, blueberries & chia seeds
- Mindful breakfast bowl
mango/cocos
- Mindful open sandwich
avocado/tomato

LUNCH

- Mindful green asparagus wraps
- Mindful pumpkin soup with sweet potato
- Mindful gorgonzola & peer salad
- Mindful toast with grilled vegetables and hummus

DINNER

- Mindful beetroot burger with goat cheese
- Mindful beetroot pizza
- Mindful penne with falafel and tomatosauce
- Mindful taco sweet potato and black beans

WEEK 3

FIND YOUR FIT

There's no strict definition of a flexitarian—and that's a good thing. Now that you're familiar with vegetarian sources of protein that you can build entire meals around, it's time to work on strategies that will make all of this second nature to you.

GOAL: Make the flexitarian habit stick

These tips will make meal planning and preparation easy.

1 Experiment. You may like the idea of going entirely meatless every other day, or you may opt for being a night-time vegetarian. Play around with different approaches until you land on something that fits best with your daily routine.

2 Stock up. In these early flexitarian days, stock up on already-prepped vegetables and grains that are recipe ready. With the right ingredients at the ready, you're less likely to fall prey to old habits.

3 Focus on flavor. Chances are you've heard about umami. It's the naturally occurring savoury taste that makes your favourite dishes so tasty. Fortunately, umami is also present in aged cheeses like Parmesan and in mushrooms, tomatoes, walnuts and soy.

WEEK 4

STAY HOOKED

By now, you've scaled back your meat consumption. That's good for your body!

GOAL: Keep things fresh

You'll likely need to remind yourself that you're not totally getting rid of meat. Focus on what you're adding: you're adding so many great flavours, just in other forms. Think like a foodie to solidify your new eating habits.

- Try a new vegetarian recipe or meal each week. Two recipes to try: Mushroom-truffle toast and roll-up halloumi-hummus.
- Join a cooking class or watch cooking videos online to pick up new meal ideas.
- Have fun with new spices and cooking oils, and try cooking tried-and-true foods in new ways, like cauliflower steaks.