

# PLANT-BASED EATING

Eat healthy, **live better**



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500 NE Multnomah St., Suite 100, Portland, OR 97232.

## EAT HEALTHY. LIVE BETTER.

**“As I see skyrocketing incidences of conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease, I am profoundly aware that there is so much potential for preventing or even reversing most of these problems through very inexpensive lifestyle changes centered on proper nutrition.”**

— Carmelo Mejia, MD, Internal Medicine, Kaiser Permanente

Eating healthy can help you feel better and maintain your health. Did you know that good nutrition can also improve chronic conditions such as heart disease, high cholesterol, diabetes, and high blood pressure?

Changing your diet can be a tall order for anyone. That’s why we’re here to provide you with support as you make changes. Health Engagement and Wellness Services offers “Plant-based Eating,” a class taught by a registered dietitian. You also can have a phone or video call with a health coach to get support and suggestions as you change your health behaviors.



## PLANT-BASED EATING:

a healthier way to eat

**“Eat food. Not too much.  
Mostly plants.”**

— *Michael Pollan*<sup>1</sup>

After reviewing this booklet, start with this simple self-assessment:

- Am I open to trying this way of eating?
- Do I think it would help?
- Can I realistically do this?

Whether you decide to switch to plant-based eating 100% or start more slowly, our team is here to support you.

<sup>1</sup>*In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* (New York: Penguin, 2009)



## PREPARE: Decide

You have taken the first step toward managing your health by reading this booklet. Ask yourself these questions to help you decide whether you are ready to start changing how you eat:

- Is your health holding you back from doing what you want?
- Is it worth the effort to make changes to your eating habits?

**On a scale of 0 to 10, how important is it to you to start eating differently?**



0 to 3  
Not very  
important

4 to 6  
Somewhat  
important

7 to 10  
Very  
important

### **Not very important (score 0 to 3)**

What would need to change to make it more important in the future?

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Even if you don't feel it is important right now, it may be helpful to keep **reading this booklet** so you can learn more about how 1 or 2 simple lifestyle changes can make a big difference.

**Somewhat important (score 4 to 6)**

Think about whether managing your health is important to you by answering the following questions:

- What do you like about the way things are right now?
- How would changing your eating habits benefit you?

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**It's very important to me! (score 7 to 10)**

Congratulations! This booklet will help you get started. Setting a goal and writing a personal action plan are the first steps toward making long-term changes. Keep reading to learn more.

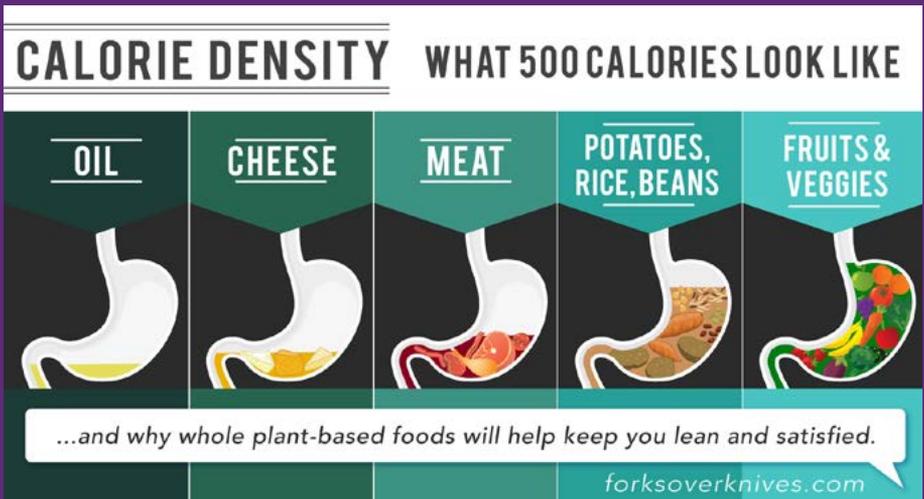


# WHAT IS A LOW-FAT, WHOLE-FOODS, PLANT-BASED DIET?

This eating plan includes lots of plant foods in their whole, unprocessed form, such as vegetables, fruits, beans, lentils, seeds, whole grains, and small amounts of unprocessed plant fats.

It does not include animal products, such as meat, poultry, fish, dairy, and eggs. It also does not include processed foods, including oil and sweets.

There are different ways of adopting this eating plan. This booklet can help you transition to a more whole-foods, plant-based diet, to whatever degree you are interested in.





# WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE HEALTH BENEFITS OF A PLANT-BASED EATING PLAN?

- Lower cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugar.
- Reversal or prevention of heart disease and diabetes.
- Longer life.
- Healthier weight.
- Lower risk of developing cancer and diabetes.
- May slow the progression of certain types of cancer.
- Improved symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis.
- Fewer medications.
- Lower food costs.

It's also good for the environment.

Best of all, a plant-based eating plan can be a **tasty, affordable, and enjoyable way to eat!**

Disclaimer: The information and advice herein is not intended for use in or as a substitute for the diagnosis or treatment of any health or physical condition or as a substitute for a physician-patient relationship which has been established by an in-person evaluation of a patient. Do not change your diet if you are ill or on medication without the advice of a qualified health care professional such as your physician.





## YOUR NEW FOOD GROUPS

**“If it came from a plant, eat it;  
if it was made in a plant, don’t.”**

— *Michael Pollan*<sup>2</sup>

Use the charts on the following pages to help you choose the foods that you will need to thrive on your new eating plan.

### Tips

- If you want to lose weight, choose a lower number of servings of nuts, seeds, and tofu.
- Choose unprocessed, whole foods instead of processed foods most of the time.
- Choose whole grains (barley, quinoa, or brown rice) more often than processed grains (bread or pasta).
- Avoid processed vegan or vegetarian “meats” and “cheeses.”
- Avoid all kinds of processed oils.
- Do not focus on portion control. Focus on calorie density instead.

<sup>2</sup>*Food Rules: An Eater’s Manual* (New York: Penguin, 2009)

FOOD GROUP	EXAMPLES OF FOOD CHOICES
<b>Tubers and starchy vegetables</b>	Potatoes, yams, winter squash, corn, green peas, cassava (yuca), plantains
<b>Beans, peas, and lentils</b>	Kidney, black, garbanzo, pinto, Great Northern, and adzuki beans; lentils; edamame (green soybeans); green and black-eyed peas; tofu; tempeh
<b>Whole grains</b>	<p>Whole grains: bulgur, quinoa, oats, brown or wild rice, buckwheat, barley, faro, whole wheat, rye, millet, sorghum</p> <p>Processed grains: whole-grain bread, whole-grain unsweetened cereal, whole-wheat tortillas, whole-wheat pasta</p>
<b>Non-starchy vegetables</b>	Spinach, kale, Swiss chard, mustard greens, collard greens, broccoli, bok choy, carrots, cauliflower, asparagus, green beans, Brussels sprouts, celery, eggplant, mushrooms, onions, garlic, tomatoes, lettuce, sugar snap peas, summer squash, peppers, artichoke hearts, cabbage, cucumbers
<b>Fruits</b>	Apples, oranges, bananas, berries, melon, papaya, grapes, mango, pineapple, kiwi, apricots
<b>High-fat plant foods</b>	Almonds, cashews, sunflower seeds, walnuts, pistachios, flaxseeds, chia seeds, nut butter, avocado, tofu
<b>Suggested dairy substitutes</b>	Unsweetened milks, such as soy, almond, rice, and hemp (look for brands fortified with vitamin B12)

DAILY SERVING SIZE	SERVING SIZE; PROTEIN
2–4 servings	½ cup: 2 grams
2–5 servings	½ cup cooked beans: 7–10 grams
5–8 servings	½ cup cooked grain, ¾ cup dry cereal, 1 slice bread, 1 small tortilla: 4–8 grams
Unlimited, but eat at least 6 servings a day. Include at least 1 serving of leafy green vegetables a day.	1 cup raw lettuce or other leafy greens; ½ cup raw or cooked, any other vegetable: 2 grams
2–4 servings	1 medium piece, 1 cup berries or melon: ½–1 gram
0–4 servings	1 ounce (¼ cup) nuts, 2 tablespoons nut butter: 4–8 grams
0–2 servings	1 cup milk: 1–9 grams





## TIPS TO GET STARTED



**Think about the meatless meals you already cook at home.** This may include whole-wheat pasta with marinara sauce, black beans and rice, or lentil soup and salad.



**Change a favorite recipe to be plant-based.**

- Make burritos or tacos with beans, rice, and vegetables and without the meat and cheese.
- Prepare chili with beans and no meat.
- Replace burgers with whole-grain veggie burgers or grilled portobello mushrooms.
- Make kebabs with vegetables, such as onions, bell peppers, summer squash, and mushrooms.
- Make lentil or split pea soup without meat.



**Try some new recipes.** At the end of this booklet, you will find a list of websites that have recipes you can try.



**Frozen fruits and vegetables are an easy and low-cost way to eat more plants.**



**Canned vegetables are another easy and low-cost way to eat more plants.**





**When you cook beans from scratch, the quick-soak method can help remove some of the indigestible sugars that cause gas.**

- Put the beans in a large pot and cover with 2 inches of water.
- Bring to a boil for 3 minutes.
- Cover and set aside for 1–4 hours.
- Rinse and drain well.



**Cooking vegetables without oil:** When you saute vegetables on the stovetop, simply replace the oil you normally use with water or vegetable broth. Vegetables naturally have a lot of water in them. It releases when they are cooked, so you only need to add a small amount of water or broth. Just keep an eye on your pan so that your vegetables don't stick.

The nice thing about sautéing in water or broth is that you end up tasting more of the food instead of the oil. If you are roasting or baking vegetables, you also do not need to use oil. These foods will still cook and, if left in long enough, they will lightly brown.



**Baked goods:** Instead of oil, use other moist foods, such as bananas, apples/applesauce, soaked dried fruit (like raisins or prunes), dates, and tofu. In preparing your pans for baking cakes, breads, or cookies, you can use parchment paper instead of oil or silicone bakeware. Instead of eggs, try ground flaxseed, silken tofu, or a baking soda and vinegar mixture.



**Check out a local farmers market for good deals on produce.**





**Salad dressing:** For salad dressings, simply omit the oil altogether and leave it at that, or then add a little water or juice to make up for the lost volume.



**Sometimes, cooking plant-based meals can take more time. To save time:**

- Make a larger pot of beans or lentils and freeze some for later.
- Buy precut fresh or frozen vegetables.
- Buy precooked grains, such as barley, faro, or brown and wild rice.
- When baking yams or potatoes, make a few extra to use in the next meal.
- Use canned beans, including nonfat refried beans.



**If your family is not following a plant-based diet with you:**

- Cook meat separately and add it to the other plant-based foods.
- Encourage your family to try more meatless meals.
- Try new recipes they might enjoy, such as five-bean chili without meat or portobello mushroom burgers.



**You might need to add a few items to your kitchen, including:**

- A good chef's knife to cut vegetables, fruits, and other plant-based foods.
- A blender or food processor.
- A large pot, pressure cooker, or crockpot to cook beans.
- A good nonstick pan.



**Make sure to drink plenty of water.** It is best to avoid juice, soda, and other sugary drinks.

# HOW TO READ A FOOD LABEL<sup>3</sup>

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
8 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>2/3 cup (55g)</b>
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
<i>Trans Fat</i> 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>13%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>14%</b>
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	<b>20%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

**FAT:** Less than 20 percent of the number of calories per serving.

**TRANS FAT:** Zero; avoid foods with hydrogenated oils.

**CHOLESTEROL:** Zero

**SODIUM:** Less than the number of calories per serving.

**FIBER:** 2-3 grams per serving.

<sup>3</sup>Adapted from UC Davis Health System, 2014.



## THE PLATE METHOD

Calorie density to meet your goals



- Start with soup and/or salad.
- 50% non-starchy vegetables (cruciferous, leafy greens) and/or fruits (sweet, citrus, melon, berries).
- 50% tubers (potato, yam, sweet potato), starchy vegetables (winter squash), intact whole-grains (brown rice, quinoa), and/or legumes (peas, lentils, beans).
- Drink water.
- Finish with fruit.





## MEAL IDEAS

**Breakfast:** Have oatmeal, quinoa, or barley with nuts, fruit, and unsweetened almond, rice, hemp, or soy milk. Add a piece of fruit on top for another quick and easy option.

**Lunch and dinner:** Have salad to start and then have a large serving of cooked non-starchy vegetables with beans and potatoes or a whole grain.

## SAMPLE MENU: DAY ONE

### Breakfast

- Barley with raisins, cinnamon, walnuts, and almond milk.
- Hot tea, coffee, or water.

### Lunch

- Whole-wheat pita with hummus, tomatoes, red onions, and cucumber.
- Kale sautéed with vegetable broth.
- Salad with vegetables and balsamic vinegar.
- Banana.
- Unsweetened tea or water.

### Dinner

- Grilled portobello mushroom burger with caramelized onions.
- Quinoa and bean salad.
- Broccoli.
- Kale salad.
- Strawberries.
- Unsweetened tea or water.

# SAMPLE MENU: DAY TWO

## Breakfast

- Oatmeal with blueberries, walnuts, and soy milk.
- Hot tea or coffee.

## Lunch

- Split pea, carrot, and barley soup.
- Salad with spring mix, vegetables, kidney beans, and balsamic vinegar.
- Orange.
- Sparkling mineral water or water.

## Dinner

- Tacos with corn tortillas, grilled vegetables, potatoes, avocado, and salsa.
- Pinto beans.
- Salad with vegetables and balsamic vinegar and mustard.
- Mango.
- Sparkling mineral water or water.

# TIPS FOR EATING OUT

Many restaurants offer some meatless options or side dishes. Restaurants are often willing to make changes to menu items by switching to meatless sauces, removing meat from stir-fry, adding vegetables or pasta in place of meat, and using less or no oil. Remember to use caution when eating out because many dishes have added oil. Do not be afraid to ask for no or less oil.

Restaurants that make food to order may be more willing to make these changes. Many cuisines, such as Mexican, Japanese, Indian, Chinese, and Thai, offer a variety of plant-based dishes and sides. Check the website **happycow.net** to find a meatless restaurant near you.



## NUTRIENTS TO CONSIDER

Overall deficiency of any of the following on a whole-foods, plant-based eating plan is exceedingly rare. If deficiencies occur, it is more likely to be from another cause or inadequate caloric intake rather than from your new diet. The only exception to this is vitamin B12.

### Vitamin B12

An adult body needs 2.4 µg of vitamin B12 daily to make red blood cells and for nerve function. If you don't get enough B12, you can develop anemia or nerve damage. Vitamin B12 is made by bacteria and is found in higher concentration in animal foods. But B12 requirements can be met in nutritional yeast and some fortified foods such as:

- Cereals.
- Rice or hemp milk.

It is helpful to read labels for these products to make sure B12 has been added.

Because it may not be easy to get enough B12 from fortified foods, it may be best to take a supplement. Talk with your health care team for more information. We recommend a B12 check being done regularly.

## Calcium

Calcium helps build bones and teeth. It is also important for the function of the heart, muscles, and nerves. An adult needs 1,000 mg of calcium each day. Good sources are Chinese cabbage, bok choy, kale, calcium-set tofu, and broccoli. There are also many calcium-fortified foods, such as soy or almond milk and cereal.

## Protein

Protein is in every cell of the body. It is used to build and repair muscles, bone, skin, and the immune system. We also need it to make hormones and enzymes. Proteins are made up of amino acids. Your body can make some of the amino acids, but not all of them. The ones your body cannot make are called essential amino acids. You need 0.8 grams of protein for every 2.2 pounds (kilogram) you weigh. You can easily meet your protein needs each day from plant foods.

## Iron

Iron is a mineral in the blood that carries oxygen. Getting enough iron (8 mg per day) is important for everyone, especially pregnant women, women of childbearing age, children, and infants. Iron-rich plant foods include whole-grain breads and cereals, dried beans and peas, dark green leafy vegetables, dried fruits, nuts, and seeds. Some foods, such as breakfast cereals, are fortified with iron. The type of iron found in plant foods is not absorbed as easily as the iron in animal products. However, eating iron-rich foods along with vitamin C can help your body better use the iron. Some foods with vitamin C are oranges, mangos, kiwis, strawberries, red peppers, tomatoes, broccoli, and bok choy.

## Zinc

Zinc is important for the immune system, wound healing, and blood sugar control. Adults need 40 mg per day. To reach this goal, look for foods such whole grains, sprouted grains, tofu, tempeh, beans, peas, lentils, nuts, seeds, and fortified breakfast cereals.

## Vitamin D

Vitamin D is actually a hormone. We need 600 IU daily for strong bones. It is also needed for muscles and nerves and for the immune system to work properly. We get most of our vitamin D when our skin is exposed to the sun. Very few foods naturally have vitamin D. Some foods, such as soy or almond milk and cereal, have added vitamin D. It is important to get outside and get a limited amount of unprotected sun exposure. If you are not able to get outside enough, you may need a supplement. Talk with your doctor.

## Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids

Omega-3s and 6s are essential fatty acids, which means we must have them each day. Omega-3s are used in the formation of cell walls and assist in improving circulation. Omega-3 fatty acids include alpha-Linolenic acid (ALA), eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA).

Good sources of plant-based omega-3 fats include flaxseeds, black beans, winter squash, walnuts, and chia seeds. It is important to remember that all plant proteins contain varying amounts of omega-3 in the form of ALA. Your body then converts ALA to EPA and DHA as required. Adults need 1.1-1.6 grams a day of Omega-3s.

We get Omega-6s from pecans, pine nuts, and sesame oil. The daily goal for adults is 11–17 grams of Omega-6 fatty acids.

## Tell your doctor you are on a plant-based eating plan

- A plant-based diet can affect your thyroid or blood-thinning medications, such as warfarin (Coumadin).
- If you are taking medications, your doctor may need to change some or all of your medications.
- Your health condition may need to be monitored more often for a short time.

## MY PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

Action plans are short-term plans that help you reach your goals. They can greatly improve your chances of success. The plan must include a specific action or behavior that you want to do and know you will be able to accomplish. Your action plan must answer the questions:

- What are you going to do?
- How much are you going to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- How many days of the week are you going to do it?

**EXAMPLE:** This week I will eat a salad (what) made with 3 cups (how much) of tomatoes, carrots, artichoke hearts, kidney beans, and cucumber with dinner (when) on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday (how many days).

**This week I will:**

(what) \_\_\_\_\_

(how much) \_\_\_\_\_

(when) \_\_\_\_\_

(how many days) \_\_\_\_\_

**How confident are you that you will succeed with your plan?**



0 = not confident at all

10 = totally confident

Your confidence level should be 7 or higher.

**I will make a commitment to** \_\_\_\_\_

(friend or family member) to follow my action plan and report back on how I did.

**Did you complete your action plan?**       Yes       No

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**This week I will:**

(what) \_\_\_\_\_

(how much) \_\_\_\_\_

(when) \_\_\_\_\_

(how many days) \_\_\_\_\_

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**Did you complete your action plan?**       Yes       No

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**This week I will:**

(what) \_\_\_\_\_

(how much) \_\_\_\_\_

(when) \_\_\_\_\_

(how many days) \_\_\_\_\_

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(friend or family member) to follow my action plan and report back on how I did.

**Did you complete your action plan?**       Yes       No

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Congratulations on taking this important step to increase your health and wellness!**

Any movement toward more plants and fewer animal proteins can improve your health. It is not an all-or-nothing eating plan. Discuss your barriers and concerns with a health coach to see if new ideas and strategies can be used.



## RESOURCES

Along with this guide, you'll find tips and resources to help you take charge of your health at [kp.org/healthengagement](https://www.kp.org/healthengagement). These include health coaching, booklets, class listings, and more.

For more Kaiser Permanente resources, visit the [kp.org](https://www.kp.org) "Health & Wellness" tab. You'll also find plenty of recipes (for plant-based and meat diets) on the Food for Health blog at [foodforhealth.kaiserpermanente.org](https://www.foodforhealth.kaiserpermanente.org).

### Additional resources

These resources are for informational purposes only. They do not necessarily represent an endorsement of their content, recommendations, or guidelines by Kaiser Permanente.

### Websites with recipes and more

- Clean Food Dirty Girl, [cleanfooddirtygirl.com](https://www.cleanfooddirtygirl.com)
- Engine 2 Diet, [engine2diet.com](https://www.engine2diet.com)
- Fatfree Vegan Recipes, [fatfreevegan.com](https://www.fatfreevegan.com)
- Forks Over Knives, [forksoverknives.com/category/recipes](https://www.forksoverknives.com/category/recipes)
- Happy Cow, [happycow.net](https://www.happycow.net)
- Happy Herbivore, [happyherbivore.com](https://www.happyherbivore.com)
- Meetup groups for Food as Medicine, [meetup.com/topics/food-as-medicine/](https://www.meetup.com/topics/food-as-medicine/)
- The Minimalist Baker, [minimalistbaker.com](https://www.minimalistbaker.com)
- Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. "21 Day Vegan Kickstart." [21daykickstart.org](https://www.21daykickstart.org)



- Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, [pcrm.org/health/diets/recipes](https://www.pcrm.org/health/diets/recipes)
- Rouxbe Online Culinary School, [rouxbe.com](https://www.rouxbe.com)
- Straight Up Food, [straightupfood.com](https://www.straightupfood.com)
- Dr. McDougall's Health & Medical Center, [drmcDougall.com](https://www.drmcDougall.com)
- Vegan Health, [veganhealth.org](https://www.veganhealth.org)
- Vegetarian Nutrition — Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, [vegetariannutrition.net](https://www.vegetariannutrition.net)
- The Vegetarian Resource Group, [vrg.org](https://www.vrg.org)
- Vegetarian Times magazine, [vegetariantimes.com](https://www.vegetariantimes.com)





You can get support in a brief chat with a coach as you discuss:

- Your health goals.
- The process of change.
- Your options for next steps.

Call 503-286-6816 or 1-866-301-3866 and select option 2. This service is free for Kaiser Permanente members. It is available Monday through Friday, in English and Spanish.

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