



Plant-Based Eating - Information YOU need to know!

Hello! Welcome to the first edition of a new nutrition focused newsletter specifically for SLPS employees. Saint Louis Public Schools, in partnership with their health insurance provider, United Healthcare, is working with MU Extension's Health and Human Sciences Extension to provide this bi-monthly (every other month) newsletter with the goal of sharing timely nutrition focused health information that you can use in your everyday life. If you have a specific topic you would like to see covered here in this newsletter, please email [Brittany Danescu](#), the United Healthcare Health Engagement Coordinator.

What is a vegetarian diet? Why should you eat more plants?

A basic vegetarian diet consists of fruits, vegetables, grains, pulses, nuts, and seeds and does not include any type of animal flesh. However, there are several different types of vegetarians:

Ovo Vegetarian: vegetarians who eat eggs

Lacto Vegetarian: vegetarians who eat dairy products

Lacto-ovo Vegetarian: vegetarians who eat dairy and egg products

1. **Get more nutrients:** Vegetarian and vegan diets are high in nutrient-dense foods meaning they contain high amounts of vitamins, minerals, fiber, and nutrients. Be sure to choose whole plant foods and fortified foods for variety.
2. **Reduce Diabetes Risk:** Studies show that even if you don't go fully vegan, increasing your intake of plant-based foods may reduce the risk of Type II diabetes.
3. **Lower Blood Sugar:** Studies show that following a vegan diet can lower blood sugar

Vegans: vegetarians who also avoid animal-derived products

“animal flesh” includes foods like beef, chicken, fish, pork, turkey

“animal-derived products” includes products like casein, gelatin, honey, and whey

levels in people with diabetes and some participants even reduced their dosage of blood sugar-lowering medication.

4. **Prevent Certain Cancers:** The National Cancer Institute states that eating higher amounts of plant-based foods can reduce your risk of stomach, lung, mouth, and throat cancer.
5. **Lower Heart Disease Risk:** Eating fresh fruits, vegetables, legumes, and fiber are all linked to reducing your risk for heart disease.

New to Plant Based Eating? Start with Simple Swaps



You don't have to quit eating meat cold turkey (pun intended!). Even if you don't decide to go fully vegan or vegetarian, you can still benefit from increasing plant-based foods.

Try incorporating a “Meatless Monday” meal once per week by swapping your meat for a plant-based protein! Consider making one of these recipes in this video from Cooking Matters® that uses garbanzo beans instead of meat.

Note that the Barley Jambalaya recipe does include turkey. This could be a great recipe for not just vegetarians in your house but also the meat-eaters. Just cook the ground turkey first, remove it from the skillet, set aside and allow the meat-eaters to add to their plate when they are ready to eat. This is a technique you can use with many other entrees you may make, such as spaghetti. Consider cooking the

Four Parts to a Well-Balanced Vegetarian Diet

1. **Nutrient-Density:** Most of your diet should come from less processed, whole-food items like beans, peas, quinoa, soy milk, vegetables, and fruits, etc. Frozen, canned, dried, and fresh are all good options!

2. **Protein-Rich:** Eliminating meat from your diet tends to decrease your protein intake, an important nutrient. **Aim to incorporate at least one type of plant-based protein at each meal.** This includes foods like beans, lentils, quinoa, chickpeas, seeds, nuts, and soy products. Here's a list of additional [plant-based proteins](#).
3. **Variety:** Just like any other diet, it's important to eat a variety of foods to ensure that you are getting enough nutrients.
4. **Vitamin B12 & Omega-3s:** Eliminating meat out of your diet can significantly decrease your vitamin B12 and omega-3 fatty acids intake. **Vitamin B12 is only found in animal products, and there are limited vegetarian omega-3s sources (chia seeds, hemp seeds, flaxseeds, walnuts).** Both nutrients are critical for good health, so talk with your healthcare professional to determine what type of supplementation is best for you.

ground beef first, setting it aside and then sauteing sliced mushrooms. The vegetarians get mushroom spaghetti while the meat-eaters gets to add in the ground beef with their noodles and mushroom spaghetti sauce.

Make Lentil Tacos Tonight!

Try these Lentil Tacos from St. Louis's very-own, Alexandra Caspero, author of the food blog, [Delish Knowledge](#). These are great way to introduce plant-based meals to your family.



[Recipe for Lentil Tacos](#)