

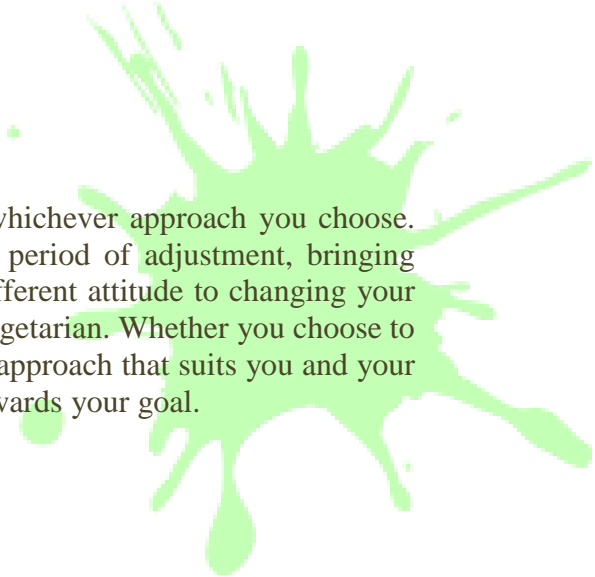
Becoming a Vegetarian

A '*5-step*' short guide

Young Friends of
the Earth Europe
Food & Agriculture
Working Group




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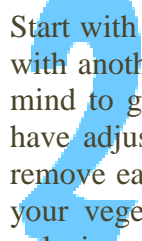
Becoming a vegetarian can be a little challenging, whichever approach you choose. When any change takes place, it always requires a period of adjustment, bringing upon struggle and doubt. Each of you will have a different attitude to changing your eating habits from being a carnivore to becoming a vegetarian. Whether you choose to become a vegetarian or even a more strict vegan, the approach that suits you and your lifestyle best, is the one that will keep you moving towards your goal.

Take it (easy)



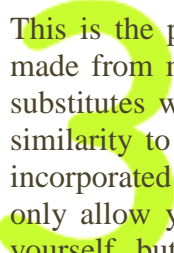
Instead of doing it all in one go, it is best to create a smooth transition into vegetarianism. To make this transition easier on your body, your mind as well as others around you, **begin with small steps**, changing your diet habits slowly. Eliminate meat products from your meals weekly or monthly. Although some people cut out an entire food group at once, **taking a gradual approach** is always easier to stick to. If you choose to eliminate other animal products such as milk and eggs, it is recommended you do it in the same slow manner, eliminating one at a time for a period that suites you best. These groups can also be replaced with alternatives. Milk alternatives have become easily accessible and consist of a number of varieties such as soy milk, rice milk, oat milk, coco milk and almond milk just to name a few.

Skip it



Start with red meat, taking this out of your diet for one to two weeks and replacing it with another form of animal such as chicken or fish. This will allow your body and mind to get used to not eating red meat, without shocking your system. Once you have adjusted to this, move onto the other meats such as chicken and fish. Again, remove each animal based food from your diet weekly, even monthly, depending on your vegetarian goals. **If you think you could take one step further**, then try reducing plain dairy foods such as milk, cheese and yogurt, and then foods that contain dairy like cakes and biscuits. **Dare being vegan?** Follow these steps and in less than a few weeks you will be meat and dairy free (oh, and cruelty free too)!

Swap it



This is the perfect time to introduce meatless substitutes to your meals. These are made from many different plants, **with the most popular of all being soya**. Meat substitutes will help you choose vegetarian options, and still enjoy the texture and similarity to meat products. Nearly all meats have their **alternative**, which can be incorporated into your meal, without actually eating meat. These meat substitutes, not only allow you to be mentally sound and to feel as though you are not depriving yourself, but they also provide you with high quality proteins, vitamins and other nutrients that your body needs.

Try it

Meatless alternatives are not the only way to get the protein and minerals that you won't be getting from meat. Many plant-based foods such as legumes, grains, nuts and seeds are packed with **calcium, iron, magnesium and essential fatty acids**. Some examples of these foods are green leafy vegetables, wholegrain rice, mushrooms, tofu, nuts, beans and peanut butter. If you keep these things in mind as you begin this new and wonderful life, you should do just fine. Before you know it, you will be eating delicious vegetarian food without even having to think about it!

The best choice

The greatest concern when becoming a vegetarian, is that you lose out on the nutrients from meat and fish, making you less healthy than your fellow meat-eaters. These nutrients consist of iron, protein, calcium, vitamin B12, zinc and vitamin D or the essential fats, omegas. **This could not be further from the truth.** A plant-based vegetarian diet, rather than one consisting of junk food, starches and sugars, can be beneficial to your health with an abundance of these same nutrients found in meat and fish. The protein and nutrients you receive from plants, such as legumes and nuts, are healthier for you, without including saturated fats, harmful hormones and toxins!

It is important for your transition into a vegetarian or vegan, to be familiar with the nutrients you are no longer acquiring from the foods you have eliminated and replacing them within your diet from healthy plant based sources. Over and above that, becoming a vegetarian is easy enough, as long as you believe in its benefits!

Happy Meat-Free days (to come)!

