
Sustainable Plant-Based Eating Guide

What is Plant-Based Eating?

- A plant-based diet mostly or entirely consists of plant-based foods.
- A plant-based diet either limits or omits animal-based foods such as meat, poultry, fish, and dairy.
- Examples of Plant-Based Diets include:
 - Vegan – A diet without any type of animal-based foods.
 - Vegetarian – A diet that omits all types of meat, poultry, fish, and seafood. This diet may include eggs and dairy.
 - Pescatarian – A diet that omits all types of meat and poultry but includes fish and seafood.
 - “Flexitarian” – A semi-vegetarian diet that focuses on plant-based foods with rare intake of meat.

Potential Benefits of following a sustainable, plant-based diet:

- Decreases risk of certain chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and many types of cancers.
- Improves the nutrition quality of your diet.
- Aids in boosting your immune system and maintaining a healthy weight.
- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions and deforestation.
- Reduces land and water used for food production.

Tips for reducing food waste and eating a plant-based diet:

- Learn to cook from scratch. Ask your dietitian if your facility has a Healthy Teaching Kitchen program.
- Plan meals ahead of time and buy only what you need to help decrease food waste.
- Opt for nutrient-filled fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts instead of replacing meat with highly processed substitutes.
- Start slowly! Try a meatless meal once a week, then add more days as you get used to it.
- Choose ingredients and flavors that you know you and your family will enjoy.
- Ask your dietitian for ideas on how to buy food from local sources and cook to reduce food waste.

Plant-Based Proteins

When limiting or avoiding animal-based foods, be sure to include plant-based sources of protein such as:

- Quinoa
- Tofu, Tempeh, and Edamame

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- Lentils
 - Beans
 - Soy Milk or Pea Milk
 - Peas
 - Nuts and Nut Butters
 - Seeds
 - Seitan
 - Hummus

For More Information:

1. **Choose Seafood Wisely** || [NOAA Fisheries](#)

Overfishing causes species loss, raising concern about a sustainable seafood supply. Consumers can choose sustainable species using the above guide.

2. **Purchase Organic Foods More Often** || [USDA Organic Farming](#)

Organic farms improve soil quality and fertility and reduce chemicals and drugs in our food supply and environment. Organic pork and poultry have less antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

3. **Eat Seasonal Produce** || [USDA Seasonal Produce](#)

Eating locally grown produce decreases carbon emissions by reducing transportation miles. Pay attention to where produce is grown and consider shopping at your local farmers' market. SNAP is now accepted by many farmers markets.

4. **Learn to cook** || [VA Healthy Teaching Kitchen](#)

Learning to cook is your best bet for eating sustainably. A few basic skills make tasty meals at home simple. Many VA hospitals and clinics now offer cooking classes. Contact your local VA Nutrition Department for more information.