NUTRITION GUIDE

VEGAN & VEGETARIAN EDITION

A practical evidence informed guide to plant-based eating, fat loss, muscle building and habits that last

PLANT-BASED.
PERFORMANCE-READY.

VEGAN | VEGETARIAN | FAT LOSS | MUSCLE BUILDING

THE CDTRAINING APPROACH

No crash diets. No forbidden foods. No need to be perfect. Learn the basics. Build meals you enjoy. Track what helps. Make changes you can keep.

For general education only. Individual nutrition needs vary. Seek appropriate professional advice where needed.

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Use this guide as both a first read and a reference you can return to during coaching.

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IMPORTANT

This guide is for general education. Individual needs vary with age, training, pregnancy, medical conditions, medication, allergies and dietary requirements. Clinical needs should be discussed with an appropriate healthcare professional.

SECTION 03

PLANT-BASED FUNDAMENTALS

A well planned vegan or vegetarian diet can support health, training and body composition very well. It needs a little more thought around protein, a few key nutrients and total energy. Variety matters.

VEGAN OR VEGETARIAN?

- **Vegan:** no meat, fish, dairy, eggs or honey
- **Vegetarian:** no meat or fish, usually includes dairy and eggs
- Mostly plant-based and flexitarian eaters can use everything in this guide
- Look for the VEGAN and VEGETARIAN tags on meals

BUILD MOST MEALS FROM FOUR PARTS

- **Protein:** tofu tempeh seitan soya mince beans lentils edamame soya yoghurt pea protein (vegetarians: eggs Greek yoghurt cottage cheese)
- **Carbohydrate:** rice potatoes oats pasta bread fruit and grains
- **Plants:** vegetables fruit beans pulses nuts seeds and wholegrains
- **Fats:** olive oil nuts seeds avocado and algae omega 3

THE BASICS

- Eat a variety of foods across the week
- Include a useful protein source at every meal
- Include fruit and vegetables every day
- Use carbohydrate foods to support activity and training
- Use fortified foods or supplements where needed

WATCH POINTS

- Protein is the nutrient most often under planned
- Vegans need a reliable B12 source. This one is not optional
- Check vitamin D, iodine, calcium, iron, zinc and omega 3
- Plant-based is not automatically healthy. Chips and biscuits can be vegan too

THE GOAL

A plant-based diet does not need to be perfect. It needs to be good enough to repeat for months and years. No crash diets. No forbidden foods. No need to be perfect.

SECTION 04

CALORIES AND ENERGY BALANCE

Calories are a measure of energy. Over time changes in body mass are strongly influenced by energy intake compared with energy expenditure.

4 kcal/g	4 kcal/g	9 kcal/g
PROTEIN	CARBOHYDRATE	FAT

FOR FAT LOSS

- A sustained calorie deficit is needed for body mass to decrease over time
- Use a moderate approach that allows good training and recovery
- Keep protein adequate and continue resistance training
- Use weekly weight trends rather than one weigh in
- If progress stalls make a small adjustment rather than a drastic cut

FOR MUSCLE GAIN

- A calorie surplus can support muscle gain
- More food does not mean unlimited muscle gain
- Keep training progressive and protein adequate
- Monitor body weight and performance and adjust gradually

PLANT FOODS AND ENERGY DENSITY

Vegetables, fruit, beans, lentils and wholegrains are filling for their calories because of their fibre and water. That helps fat loss, but it can make a surplus harder to reach. Oils, nuts, nut butters, seeds and many vegan convenience foods are very calorie dense. Same rules, different challenges.

SCALE WEIGHT IS NOT BODY FAT

Water. Glycogen. Sodium. Food volume. Bowel contents and menstrual cycle changes can all move scale weight without a matching change in body fat. Changing the amount of fibre you eat can also shift scale weight for a few days.

SECTION 05

PROTEIN ON A PLANT-BASED DIET

Protein provides amino acids for tissue repair, muscle protein synthesis and many other biological functions.

0.83 g/kg
GENERAL ADULT REFERENCE

~1.6 g/kg
PRACTICAL TARGET

~2.0 g/kg
PRACTICAL UPPER RANGE

PLANT PROTEIN SOURCES

Tofu tempeh seitan soya mince edamame soya milk and yoghurt beans lentils chickpeas peas quinoa oats nuts seeds peanut butter and pea or soy protein powder.

FOR VEGETARIANS

Eggs Greek yoghurt skyr cottage cheese milk and whey protein add convenient, high quality protein. Vegan options work well too.

WHY PLANT PROTEIN NEEDS A LITTLE PLANNING

- Plant proteins are often slightly less digestible and lower in leucine per gram
- Soy and pea are strong choices. Mixing sources across the day covers every amino acid
- You do not need to combine them in the same meal
- Aiming for the middle to upper part of the 1.6 to 2.0 g/kg range is a simple safety margin

EVIDENCE NOTE

When total protein is matched and training is progressive, plant-based and omnivorous diets can support similar strength and muscle gains in healthy adults. Around 1.6 g per kg per day is a useful evidence informed target for many resistance trained adults. Higher intakes can help in some dieting situations but are not automatically better.

DAILY PROTEIN BY BODY WEIGHT

BODY WEIGHT	1.6 G/KG (PRACTICAL TARGET)	1.8 G/KG	2.0 G/KG (PRACTICAL UPPER RANGE)
60 kg	96 g	108 g	120 g
70 kg	112 g	126 g	140 g
80 kg	128 g	144 g	160 g
90 kg	144 g	162 g	180 g
100 kg	160 g	180 g	200 g

SIMPLE RULE

Build each main meal around a clear protein source. Then add carbohydrate. Plants. And a suitable fat source.

SECTION 06

PLANT PROTEIN CHEAT SHEET

Approximate values to help you build meals. Brands vary, so check the label when accuracy matters.

VEGAN FOOD	PROTEIN PER 100 G	TYPICAL PORTION	PROTEIN PER PORTION	NOTE
Tofu (firm)	14 g	150 g	21 g	Silken tofu is much lower
Tempeh	19 g	100 g	19 g	Fermented soya beans
Seitan	24 g	100 g	24 g	Wheat protein. Not gluten free
Soya mince (dry)	50 g	30 g	15 g	Weigh dry
Edamame	11 g	80 g	9 g	
Lentils (cooked)	9 g	150 g	14 g	Also a carbohydrate source
Chickpeas (canned)	7 g	150 g	10 g	Also a carbohydrate source
Black beans (canned)	7 g	150 g	10 g	Also a carbohydrate source
Soya milk	3.3 g	250 ml	8 g	Choose fortified, unsweetened
Pea protein powder	80 g	30 g	24 g	Check the label
Peanut butter	25 g	20 g	5 g	Calorie dense
Porridge oats (dry)	11 g	60 g	7 g	

VEGETARIAN ADD-ONS	PROTEIN PER 100 G	TYPICAL PORTION	PROTEIN PER PORTION	NOTE
Eggs	12.5 g	100 g	12 g	About two large eggs
Greek yoghurt (0%)	10 g	200 g	20 g	
Cottage cheese	11.5 g	150 g	17 g	
Whey protein powder	77 g	30 g	23 g	Check the label

HOW TO USE THIS PAGE

Pick two or three protein foods you enjoy from each column and rotate them. A typical day of three meals with 25 to 40 g of protein each, plus a snack or shake, lands in the 100 to 160 g range.

SECTION 07

CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates are an important fuel source. They are especially useful for higher intensity exercise because stored carbohydrate can be accessed quickly.

USEFUL CARBOHYDRATE SOURCES

- Oats
- Rice
- Potatoes and sweet potatoes
- Pasta
- Bread and wraps
- Fruit
- Beans and lentils
- Quinoa and wholegrain cereals

AROUND TRAINING

- Before training choose carbohydrate you digest comfortably
- After training carbohydrate helps replenish glycogen
- Total daily intake matters more than obsessing over a tiny post workout window
- Keep fat and fibre lower before hard sessions if that suits your digestion

BEANS AND LENTILS DO TWO JOBS

Pulses supply protein, carbohydrate and fibre together. A 150 g portion of cooked lentils gives roughly 14 g protein and 30 g carbohydrate. That is great for health and training, but if you are cutting calories you may want tofu, tempeh, seitan or soya mince as your main protein source so the carbohydrate does not take over.

PLANT-BASED ATHLETES

Plant-based diets are often high in carbohydrate and fibre already. If appetite is limited or you are building muscle, easier-to-eat carbohydrates such as white rice, pasta, potatoes, bread and fruit make hitting your calories simpler.

CARBS ARE NOT THE ENEMY

Carbohydrate does not automatically cause fat gain. Total energy intake and dietary pattern matter. Match intake to activity, goals and preference.

SECTION 08

DIETARY FATS

Fat is essential for cell membranes, hormone production, energy and absorption of vitamins A, D, E and K.

TYPE	EXAMPLES	PRACTICAL POINT
Monounsaturated	Olive oil avocado nuts rapeseed oil	Useful unsaturated fat source
Polyunsaturated	Walnuts seeds flax chia vegetable oils algae oil	Includes omega 3 and omega 6
Saturated	Butter cheese coconut oil palm oil	Keep within UK guidance. Some vegan butters and cheeses are coconut or palm based
Trans fats	Some industrially produced fats	Keep intake as low as possible

FAT IS NOT BAD

The important question is how much and what type. Unsaturated fats are an important part of a balanced diet. Fat contains 9 kcal per gram so portions can change meal calories quickly. Plant-based diets lean on nuts, seeds, oils, avocado and nut butters, which are nutritious and easy to over pour.

PLANT FAT SOURCES

- Extra virgin olive oil and rapeseed oil
- Avocado and olives
- Peanut butter almond butter and tahini
- Walnuts almonds cashews and mixed nuts
- Flax chia hemp and pumpkin seeds
- Algae oil for EPA and DHA

PRACTICAL TIP

Measure oils, nut butters and dressings for a period if calorie control is important. 1 tbsp (15 g) of olive oil is about 135 kcal and 20 g of peanut butter is about 120 kcal. Portion awareness is more useful than fearing nutritious high fat foods.

SECTION 09

SUGAR WITHOUT THE FEAR

Sugar is not a poison and eating sugar does not automatically make a diet unhealthy. The useful distinction is between total sugars and free sugars.

FREE SUGARS INCLUDE

- Sugar added during cooking or manufacturing
- Honey syrups and similar ingredients
- Agave maple and date syrups
- Sugar in fruit juice and juice concentrates

NATURALLY OCCURRING SUGARS

- Whole fruit
- Vegetables
- Plain milk
- Plain yoghurt

THE NHS REFERENCE

Adults should have no more than 30 g of free sugars per day. This is a limit for free sugars rather than a ban on foods containing sugar. Whole fruit and plain dairy are not treated the same way.

PLANT-BASED SWAPS TO WATCH

Sweetened plant milks, flavoured soya and coconut yoghurts, sweet granolas and many vegan desserts can contain a lot of free sugar. Choose unsweetened fortified milks and plain yoghurts most of the time and add your own fruit.

THE PRACTICAL MESSAGE

Sugary drinks and energy dense foods can make it easy to consume more energy than intended. Enjoying a sweet food can still fit within an overall balanced diet. Look at the whole pattern rather than one ingredient.

SECTION 10

FIBRE AND GUT HEALTH

Fibre supports normal bowel function and is associated with a range of health benefits. A varied plant rich diet is the easiest way to get it.

~30 g/day

UK ADULT REFERENCE

HIGH FIBRE FOODS

- Oats and wholegrain cereals
- Wholegrain bread and pasta
- Beans lentils and chickpeas
- Fruit and vegetables
- Nuts and seeds
- Potatoes with the skin where practical

INCREASE GRADUALLY

- Increase fibre over time if intake is low
- Drink enough fluid
- Spread higher fibre foods across the day
- Start with small portions of beans and build up. Rinse canned beans and soak dried ones
- Persistent digestive symptoms need appropriate healthcare advice

PLANT-BASED EATERS OFTEN EXCEED 30 G

That is usually fine if it is comfortable. Very high fibre intakes can leave you full before you reach your calories or protein, which matters for muscle gain and for small appetites. Swap some wholegrain foods for lower fibre options if you struggle to eat enough.

DO NOT CHASE FIBRE AT ALL COSTS

More is not always better for every individual. The target is a practical healthy intake that the person can tolerate.

SECTION 11

VITAMINS AND MINERALS

Micronutrients are needed in smaller amounts but are essential for normal body function. Food first is the default, with a few smart exceptions for plant-based diets.

NUTRIENT	PLANT-BASED FOOD SOURCES	WHY IT MATTERS
Vitamin B12	Fortified plant milks, yeast extract, fortified nutritional yeast and cereals. Dairy and eggs for vegetarians	Blood and nervous system function. Vegans need a supplement or reliable fortified foods
Vitamin D	Fortified foods, UV exposed mushrooms, sunlight. Eggs for vegetarians	Bone and muscle health
Iodine	Iodine fortified plant milks, iodised salt, small amounts of seaweed. Dairy and eggs for vegetarians	Thyroid hormone production
Iron	Lentils beans tofu fortified cereals pumpkin seeds leafy greens	Normal blood formation and oxygen transport
Calcium	Calcium fortified plant milks and yoghurts, calcium set tofu, kale, tahini, almonds	Bones teeth muscle and nerve function
Zinc	Pulses tofu nuts seeds oats wholegrains	Immune function and recovery
Selenium	Brazil nuts (a couple a few times a week), wholegrains, tofu	Thyroid and antioxidant systems
Omega 3 (EPA and DHA)	Algae oil. ALA from flax chia walnuts and rapeseed oil	Heart, brain and eye health

ABSORPTION TIPS

- Pair iron rich plant foods with vitamin C (peppers, citrus, berries)
- Keep tea and coffee away from iron rich meals
- Soaking, sprouting, fermenting and sourdough can improve mineral availability

VITAMIN D IN THE UK

UK guidance commonly advises adults to consider 10 micrograms of vitamin D daily during autumn and winter. Some higher risk groups are advised to take it year round.

SECTION 12

THE KEY PLANT-BASED SUPPLEMENTS

These are the few supplements with a clear reason to exist on a vegan or vegetarian diet. Everything else is optional.

SUPPLEMENT	WHO IT APPLIES TO	PRACTICAL NOTE
Vitamin B12	All vegans. Some vegetarians with low dairy and egg intake	Commonly cited UK options: 10 micrograms daily, or about 2,000 micrograms weekly, or at least 3 micrograms a day spread over fortified foods. Choose one and be consistent
Vitamin D	Most UK adults in autumn and winter. Year round if little sun exposure	10 micrograms daily is the usual guidance. D3 from lichen is vegan friendly. D2 is also vegan
Iodine	Vegans and anyone who avoids dairy, eggs and fish	Around 150 micrograms daily is a common supplement amount if you do not use a fortified milk. Avoid high dose kelp, which can overshoot
Algae omega 3	Vegans and anyone who rarely eats fish	Check the label for EPA and DHA. About 250 mg combined a day is a commonly used target
Iron, zinc, calcium	Only where the diet or a test shows a need	Food first. Test before supplementing iron

TEST DO NOT GUESS

If you have been vegan for a long time, feel unusually tired or have symptoms you cannot explain, ask your GP or pharmacist about checking B12, ferritin and vitamin D rather than guessing with high dose products.

CHECK THE LABEL

Capsule shells can contain gelatin and some vitamin D3 comes from sheep wool. Look for products marked suitable for vegans. Supplements can interact with medication, so ask a pharmacist if in doubt.

LIFE STAGES

Pregnancy, breastfeeding, childhood, adolescence and older age have specific requirements. Plant-based diets can be suitable but should be planned with advice from an appropriate healthcare professional.

SECTION 13

OMEGA 3 AND OMEGA 6

Omega 3 and omega 6 are families of polyunsaturated fats. The main omega 3s discussed in nutrition are ALA, EPA and DHA.

THE THREE OMEGA 3S

- ALA: flaxseed chia hemp walnuts and rapeseed oil
- EPA and DHA: oily fish and algae
- Conversion of ALA to EPA and DHA in the body is limited

EASY ALA HABITS

- A spoon of ground flax or chia in porridge or a shake
- A small handful of walnuts on yoghurt or salad
- Cook or dress with rapeseed oil some of the time

FOOD FIRST

In the UK the usual advice is two portions of fish a week including one oily. If you eat no fish, regular ALA foods are a good base and algae based sources are the plant-based route to EPA and DHA.

OMEGA 3 SUPPLEMENTS

Routine omega 3 supplementation is not recommended for the general UK population because evidence for broad benefit is inconclusive. If a supplement is considered because fish intake is nil or low, algae oil is the vegan option. Check the EPA and DHA amounts on the label.

WHAT ABOUT OMEGA 6?

Omega 6 is found in nuts, seeds and vegetable oils. It is part of a normal healthy diet and there is no need to avoid it. Just include omega 3 sources regularly too.

SECTION 14

SUPPLEMENTS EXPLAINED

Supplements are optional tools. They can be useful when they solve a real problem but they should not replace a solid diet.

1 FOOD QUALITY AND ADEQUATE ENERGY

2 PROTEIN AND OVERALL DIET

3 TRAINING SLEEP AND RECOVERY

4 EVIDENCE BASED SUPPLEMENTS WHERE USEFUL

5 EVERYTHING ELSE

WHEN SUPPLEMENTS MAKE SENSE

A diagnosed deficiency. A dietary pattern that makes a nutrient difficult to obtain, such as B12 on a vegan diet. A life stage with specific requirements. A practical performance supplement with good evidence. Or advice from a qualified professional.

SECTION 15

CREATINE MONOHYDRATE

Creatine is one of the most extensively researched sports supplements. Its main role is supporting the rapid regeneration of ATP during short intense efforts.

WHAT CREATINE IS

Creatine is naturally occurring and stored mainly in skeletal muscle. The body synthesises some from amino acids. Dietary creatine comes mainly from meat and fish, so plant-based diets provide very little.

WHY IT IS RELEVANT HERE

Vegetarians and vegans tend to have lower starting muscle creatine, so some people respond more noticeably. Supplemental creatine monohydrate is made synthetically and is suitable for vegans. Check capsule shells for gelatin or choose powder.

WHAT IT DOES

Muscle stores creatine as phosphocreatine. Phosphocreatine helps rapidly regenerate ATP during short high intensity work. This can support strength training, sprinting and repeated high intensity exercise.

WHAT IT CAN HELP WITH

Evidence supports improvements in high intensity exercise capacity, strength and lean mass gains when creatine is combined with resistance training.

HOW TO USE IT

Choose plain creatine monohydrate. A simple practical approach is 3 to 5 g every day. Timing is less important than consistent use. A loading phase is optional.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Some people gain a small amount of body weight as muscle creatine and associated water increase. This is not the same as gaining body fat. Creatine is not magic and still relies on training, food, sleep and recovery.

SECTION 16

PERFORMANCE SUPPLEMENTS

A few supplements have useful evidence in specific situations. The benefit is usually modest and context dependent.

CAFFEINE

Can improve alertness and exercise performance for some people. Individual tolerance varies. Avoid relying on stimulants to compensate for poor sleep. People with relevant medical conditions or medication needs should seek appropriate advice.

PLANT PROTEIN POWDER

Pea, soy, rice and blended powders can be convenient ways to reach a daily protein target. Blends often have a more complete amino acid profile. Whey and casein suit vegetarians. They are food convenience rather than a special muscle building substance.

CARBOHYDRATE

Useful around longer or harder sessions where fuel availability matters. Food and drinks can be used depending on the session.

ELECTROLYTES

Most people can cover normal hydration needs with food and fluids. Electrolytes can become more relevant during prolonged sweaty exercise or heat.

CHOOSING A POWDER

- Aim for about 20 to 25 g protein per serving
- Prefer limited added sugar and a short ingredient list
- Look for a vegan or vegetarian suitability mark
- Third party tested products reduce contamination risk

WHAT MATTERS MOST

A supplement should add a small advantage to an already solid routine. It should never be the foundation of the programme.

SECTION 17

SUPPLEMENTS TO THINK TWICE ABOUT

More supplements does not mean more progress. High dose products can be unnecessary and in some cases harmful.

PRODUCT OR CATEGORY	WHY ROUTINE USE MAY NOT BE NEEDED
Iron	Supplement when deficiency or a medical indication is established
High dose zinc	Long term excess can interfere with copper status
High dose vitamin A	Excess can be harmful
High dose vitamin D	More is not better and excess can cause toxicity
Kelp and high dose iodine	Iodine can overshoot easily. Use a measured supplement or fortified foods instead
Mega dose vitamin C	Usually unnecessary with a varied diet
BCAA supplements	Usually unnecessary when daily protein is already adequate
Greens and superfood powders	Not a substitute for fruit, vegetables and pulses
Detox products	No good evidence that they cleanse the body
Fat burners	Often rely on stimulants and are not a substitute for an energy deficit
Testosterone boosters	Evidence is generally poor for meaningful effects in healthy adults

DEFICIENCY RULE

If someone suspects a deficiency they should speak to an appropriate healthcare professional rather than guessing with high dose supplements. Supplements can interact with medication.

SECTION 18

HOW TO TRACK FOOD

Tracking can be useful when accuracy matters or when someone wants to understand portion sizes. It is not compulsory.

TRACKING CHECKLIST

- Use one app consistently
- Weigh foods while learning portions
- Check whether the entry is raw, dry, canned or cooked
- Track oils sauces spreads drinks and snacks
- Enter every recipe ingredient and divide by portions
- Use food labels where possible

PLANT-BASED TRACKING TRAPS

- Dry lentils, soya mince and oats weigh very differently once cooked or soaked
- Tofu varies a lot. Firm and silken are not the same
- Pick the entry for your exact brand of milk, yoghurt and meat alternative
- Nut butters and oils are easy to under log

RAW VERSUS COOKED

Rice, pasta, lentils and beans absorb water during cooking. The same food can therefore have a very different weight after cooking. Match the database entry to the state of the food you weighed.

WEEKLY AVERAGES

One high or low day does not define progress. Look at trends across the week and make changes gradually.

TRACKING SHOULD REDUCE UNCERTAINTY

If tracking makes eating stressful use simpler habits instead. The best system is the one you can follow.

SECTION 19

FOOD LABELS AND PORTIONS

Nutrition labels are tools for comparison. They are not a verdict on whether a food is good or bad.

CHECK PER 100 G

- Energy shows calorie density
- Protein helps compare protein contribution
- Fibre helps identify higher fibre choices
- Saturates can help manage saturated fat intake
- Salt helps you keep an eye on sodium
- Ingredients show what the product is mainly made from

PLANT-BASED LABEL CHECKS

- Look for the vegan or vegetarian mark, not just the word plant based
- "May contain" allergen notes are not the same as non-vegan ingredients
- Fortified plant milks: look for calcium (often around 120 mg per 100 ml), B12 and iodine
- Choose unsweetened versions where you can
- Meat alternatives vary widely in protein, so compare

PORTION AWARENESS

Nuts, oils, nut butters, vegan cheeses and dressings are easy to underestimate. Use a food scale for a period if accuracy matters. Once you understand portions you may not need to weigh everything forever.

DO NOT FEAR CALORIE DENSE FOODS

A food can be calorie dense and still be nutritious. The useful question is how much fits the person's total diet.

SIMPLE SHOPPING SYSTEM

Choose a protein source. Choose a carbohydrate. Add fruit or vegetables. Add a measured fat source. Then choose foods you genuinely enjoy.

SECTION 20

MAKING CHANGES THAT LAST

The most effective diet is usually the one a person can follow during busy weeks, weekends, holidays, social events and stressful periods.

SMALL CHANGES THAT WORK

- Change one meal before changing the whole day
- Add protein before removing foods
- Add fruit or vegetables before cutting treats
- Reduce portions slightly rather than crash dieting
- Keep easy meals available
- Use frozen vegetables and freezer meals
- Plan for weekends

GOING PLANT-BASED

- Start with swaps of meals you already enjoy, such as chilli, curry and pasta
- Add one new protein food at a time, such as tofu or tempeh
- Sort B12 and vitamin D from day one
- Expect digestion to adjust over a few weeks
- Keep a few trusted convenience meals for tired days

THE RESET RULE

A higher calorie meal is not a failed diet. Return to normal at the next meal. Do not punish it with starvation or excessive exercise.

THINK IN SYSTEMS

Ask what breakfast you can repeat. What lunch you can prepare. What food you can keep at work. What you will eat when you are tired. Those answers create the diet.

CONSISTENCY OVER PERFECTION

No crash diets. No forbidden foods. No need to be perfect.

SECTION 21

MEAL PREP AND FREEZER MEALS

Preparation reduces decision fatigue. The aim is not to eat the same meal forever. It is to make good choices easier on busy days.

FREEZER FRIENDLY

- Red lentil dahl
- Three bean chilli with soya mince
- Lentil and soya bolognese
- Tofu or chickpea curry
- Bean burritos and breakfast wraps
- Cooked grains and potatoes

FOOD SAFETY

- Cool cooked food promptly. Cool rice quickly and refrigerate it
- Use suitable containers
- Label portions and dates
- Reheat until piping hot
- Keep fresh toppings separate when texture matters

PREP IN ONE HOUR

- Cook a big pot of grains or potatoes
- Bake or air fry a tray of tofu or tempeh
- Batch cook one sauce or curry
- Chop vegetables and portion snacks

KEEP FLAVOUR HIGH

Plant proteins take on flavour well. Marinate tofu and tempeh, use smoked paprika, cumin, curry spices, miso, soy sauce, nutritional yeast and fresh herbs to keep repeated meals interesting.

FREEZER MEAL FORMULA

Protein + carbohydrate + vegetables + sauce. Keep the base meal consistent then change herbs, spices or toppings so the same prep does not feel repetitive.

CHAPTER: FAT LOSS

PLANT-BASED FAT LOSS

Fat loss comes from a sustained, moderate calorie deficit with enough protein and training to protect muscle. Plant-based eating makes that easier in some ways and trickier in others.

300-500 kcal	0.5-1%	1.8-2.0 g/kg
TYPICAL DAILY DEFICIT	BODY WEIGHT LOST PER WEEK	PROTEIN IN A DEFICIT

STEP 1: FIND A STARTING CALORIE TARGET

Estimate maintenance with the Mifflin St Jeor equation, then multiply by an activity factor. **Men:** (10 x kg) + (6.25 x cm) - (5 x age) + 5. **Women:** (10 x kg) + (6.25 x cm) - (5 x age) - 161.

ACTIVITY LEVEL	MULTIPLY BMR BY
Little exercise, desk job	1.2
Light exercise 1 to 3 days a week	1.375
Moderate exercise 3 to 5 days a week	1.55
Hard exercise 6 to 7 days a week	1.725

Worked example: a 75 kg, 175 cm, 30 year old man. BMR = 1,700 kcal. At a 1.55 activity factor maintenance is about 2,630 kcal. A deficit of 400 kcal gives a starting target of about 2,230 kcal per day. This is an estimate. Use your weekly average weight trend to adjust after two to three weeks.

STEP 2: SET PROTEIN

Aim for about 1.8 to 2.0 g per kg of body weight. Spread it over three to five meals. Protein helps you feel full and helps protect muscle in a deficit. See the daily protein table in the protein section.

STEP 3: BUILD VOLUME

Fill plates with vegetables, salad, fruit, potatoes, beans and wholegrains. Soups and big stir fries are very filling for their calories. For protein, tofu, tempeh, seitan, soya mince, edamame and pea protein are lower in carbohydrate than beans and fit a deficit well.

STEP 4: MANAGE CALORIE DENSE PLANT FOODS

Vegan does not automatically mean low calorie. These foods are healthy, but small amounts add up quickly.

CALORIE DENSE FOOD	PORTION	ABOUT
Olive oil	1 tbsp (15 g)	135 kcal
Peanut butter	1 heaped tbsp (20 g)	120 kcal
Almonds	Small handful (30 g)	175 kcal
Avocado	Half (70 g)	105 kcal
Hummus	2 tbsp (50 g)	105 kcal

CHAPTER: FAT LOSS (CONTINUED)

STEP 5: TRACK THE TREND

- Weigh at the same time on 3 to 4 mornings a week and use the weekly average
- Add a waist measurement and progress photos every two to four weeks
- Watch gym performance. Strength holding steady is a good sign

IF PROGRESS STALLS

- Check portions of oils, nuts and snacks first
- Give it two to three weeks before changing anything
- Then trim about 100 to 150 kcal or add daily steps
- Avoid drastic cuts

PROTECT MUSCLE

- Keep lifting and keep it progressive
- Hit your protein target daily
- Sleep and recover well
- Creatine is still useful in a deficit

HUNGER TOOLBOX

- Protein at every meal
- High fibre carbohydrates such as oats, beans and potatoes
- Large vegetable portions and soups
- Plan your highest calorie meal for when you are hungriest

REALISTIC PACE

Slower fat loss is easier to hold, keeps training quality higher and protects muscle. A reasonable rate is around 0.5 to 1 percent of body weight per week. Beginners with more to lose may start at the faster end.

DIET BREAKS ARE ALLOWED

Long diets are easier with planned maintenance weeks, holidays and social meals. A week at maintenance every so often is not a failure.

WHO SHOULD GET INDIVIDUAL ADVICE

This chapter is general education for healthy adults. If you are under 18, pregnant or breastfeeding, have a history of disordered eating, have a medical condition or take medication, get individual professional advice. Avoid very low calorie diets without supervision.

EXAMPLE DAY

See the Example days section for a worked fat loss day with calories and protein.

CHAPTER: MUSCLE BUILDING

PLANT-BASED MUSCLE BUILDING

Muscle gain needs progressive training, enough protein, a small calorie surplus and time. Plant-based diets can support all four.

+250-500 kcal
TYPICAL DAILY SURPLUS

0.25-0.5%
BODY WEIGHT GAIN PER WEEK

1.6-2.0 g/kg
DAILY PROTEIN

STEP 1: START WITH CALORIES

Estimate maintenance using the equation in the fat loss chapter, then add 250 to 500 kcal. For the 75 kg example that is roughly 2,880 to 3,130 kcal per day. Beginners can sit at the upper end. Slower gain means less fat gain.

STEP 2: HIT PROTEIN

Aim for 1.6 to 2.0 g per kg per day across three to five meals. Roughly 0.3 to 0.4 g per kg per meal is a handy guide, which is about 25 to 35 g for an 80 kg person. Plant protein tends to work best at the upper end of that range.

STEP 3: TRAIN PROGRESSIVELY

- Train each muscle group about twice a week
- Aim to add reps or load over time
- Train close to failure on most working sets
- Recover well and sleep consistently

STEP 4: USE CREATINE

Creatine monohydrate at 3 to 5 g a day is one of the best supported supplements for strength and lean mass. It is especially relevant on plant-based diets where dietary creatine is low.

THE BULKY FOOD PROBLEM

Plant foods are filling. If you struggle to eat enough, lean on easy calories and liquid calories rather than forcing huge plates of high fibre food.

EASY CALORIE ADDS	ABOUT	PROTEIN
Banana and 20 g peanut butter	215 kcal	6 g
2 slices wholegrain bread and 20 g peanut butter	285 kcal	12 g
300 ml soya milk and 20 g pea protein	175 kcal	26 g
30 g almonds and a banana	275 kcal	7 g
150 g cooked pasta or rice and 10 g olive oil	315 kcal	8 g

CHAPTER: MUSCLE BUILDING (CONTINUED)

MAKE EATING EASIER

- Use soya milk, smoothies and shakes for extra calories
- Choose white rice, pasta, potatoes and bread when fibre is filling you up
- Add olive oil, nut butter and avocado to meals
- Eat more often. Four or five eating moments help

PROTEIN QUALITY TIPS

- Use a mix of soy, pea, wheat, legumes and grains across the day
- Include tofu, tempeh, seitan or soya mince most days
- A plant protein shake is a simple top up
- Vegetarians can add dairy and eggs

STEP 5: MONITOR

- Weekly average body weight and gym performance
- Waist and body measurements every few weeks
- Gaining much faster than 0.5 percent a week usually means extra fat gain
- No change after two to three weeks: add about 100 to 150 kcal

KEEP IT SENSIBLE

More food does not mean unlimited muscle gain. Once you are gaining steadily, stay there. When you want to lean out, move into the fat loss chapter and keep the training going.

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS

Studies comparing soy or plant-based diets with animal protein diets, matched for total protein and with progressive resistance training, generally find similar muscle and strength gains. Total protein, calories and training quality matter more than the source.

EXAMPLE DAY

See the Example days section for a worked muscle building day with calories and protein.

SECTION 24

BREAKFASTS AND SHAKES

Starting the day with a real protein source makes the rest of the day easier. Amounts are as eaten. Nutrition values are approximate.

TOFU SCRAMBLE BREAKFAST WRAP

VEGAN

200 g firm tofu | 60 g wholemeal wrap | 30 g spinach | 80 g peppers and tomatoes | 5 g olive oil

~500 kcal | P35 g | C37 g | F24 g

BERRY PROTEIN SHAKE

VEGAN

30 g pea protein | 250 g fortified soya milk | 100 g berries | 100 g banana | 40 g oats

~480 kcal | P39 g | C59 g | F10 g

PEANUT BUTTER PROTEIN PORRIDGE

VEGAN

70 g oats | 300 g soya milk | 100 g banana | 20 g peanut butter | 20 g pea protein

~640 kcal | P40 g | C70 g | F22 g

OVERNIGHT OATS

VEGETARIAN

60 g oats | 200 g 0% Greek yoghurt | 150 g milk | 100 g berries | 10 g peanut butter

~500 kcal | P35 g | C61 g | F13 g

EGGS ON TOAST

VEGETARIAN

100 g eggs | 150 g egg whites | 100 g wholegrain bread | 100 g tomatoes | 100 g fruit

~515 kcal | P40 g | C57 g | F14 g

EASY SWAPS

- Greek yoghurt to unsweetened soya yoghurt plus a scoop of pea protein
- Whey to pea or soy protein
- Eggs to tofu scramble with a pinch of turmeric and black salt
- Cow milk to fortified soya milk for more protein than most plant milks

MORE BREAKFAST IDEAS

Soya yoghurt with berries and chia | tofu scramble on toast | porridge with soya milk and walnuts | peanut butter on toast with banana | smoothie with spinach and pea protein.

SECTION 25

LUNCHES AND DINNERS

Each meal follows the same pattern: protein, carbohydrate, vegetables and a measured fat or sauce. Amounts are as eaten. Nutrition values are approximate.

TOFU AND RICE BOWL

VEGAN

200 g firm tofu | 200 g cooked basmati rice | 200 g mixed vegetables | 30 g light stir fry sauce | 5 g olive oil

~640 kcal | P38 g | C76 g | F21 g

RED LENTIL DAHL WITH TOFU

VEGAN

70 g dry red lentils | 100 g chopped tomatoes | 50 g spinach | 100 g light coconut milk | 150 g cooked rice | 100 g tofu | 5 g oil

~675 kcal | P39 g | C88 g | F19 g

TEMPEH AND SWEET POTATO TRAYBAKE

VEGAN

150 g tempeh | 300 g sweet potato | 150 g broccoli | 10 g olive oil

~710 kcal | P38 g | C78 g | F28 g

LENTIL AND SOYA BOLOGNESE

VEGAN

30 g dry soya mince | 150 g cooked lentils | 200 g passata | 200 g cooked pasta | 100 g vegetables

~645 kcal | P43 g | C110 g | F4 g

SEITAN FAJITA WRAPS

VEGAN

150 g seitan | 2 wholemeal wraps (120 g) | 150 g peppers and onions | 5 g olive oil | 30 g salsa

~660 kcal | P49 g | C78 g | F17 g

COTTAGE CHEESE AND BEAN JACKET POTATO

VEGETARIAN

350 g baked potato | 150 g cottage cheese | 100 g baked beans | 80 g side salad

~475 kcal | P30 g | C80 g | F4 g

MORE MEAL IDEAS

Smoked tofu salad wrap | seitan stir fry | chickpea and quinoa grain salad | bean chilli with rice | tofu curry | veggie burger with potato wedges.

PROTEIN CHECK

Meals that rely on rice, pasta and vegetables alone often land under 20 g protein. Add a clear protein source or a protein rich side such as edamame, soya yoghurt or a shake so each main meal sits around 25 to 40 g.

SECTION 26

SNACKS AND MEAL BUILDER

Snacks are optional. Use them when they make the overall diet easier.

PROTEIN RICH

Soya yoghurt and berries | cottage cheese and fruit | protein shake and banana | roasted chickpeas | edamame | tofu and hummus wrap | boiled eggs and toast

MORE ENERGY

Oats with soya milk and banana | toast with peanut butter and fruit | soya yoghurt with granola and berries | measured nuts and dried fruit

LIGHTER OPTIONS

Fruit | plain soya yoghurt | vegetable sticks with hummus | popcorn | a low calorie drink alongside a meal if preferred

PRE TRAINING

If you are hungry before training choose something you digest comfortably. Carbohydrate may be useful. Keep fat and fibre lower if that suits your digestion.

CDTRAINING PLANT-BASED MEAL BUILDER

1 **PROTEIN**
Tofu | tempeh | seitan | lentils | eggs | yoghurt

2 **CARBOHYDRATE**
Rice | potatoes | oats | pasta | bread | fruit

3 **NON STARCHY VEG**
Broccoli | spinach | peppers | green beans

4 **HEALTHY FAT**
Olive oil | nuts | seeds | avocado

5 **FLUIDS**
Water first | adjust for activity and heat

6 **FORTIFIED EXTRAS**
Soya milk | B12 | iodine source

Adjust portions to your goal, appetite, activity and individual requirements. No single meal needs to be perfect.

MORE CDTRAINING MEAL IDEAS

SMOKED TOFU HUMMUS WRAP

~405 kcal | P25 g | C37 g | F18 g

SEITAN STIR FRY

~610 kcal | P47 g | C84 g | F10 g

CHICKPEA QUINOA SALAD

~560 kcal | P27 g | C66 g | F21 g

COTTAGE CHEESE JACKET POTATO

~475 kcal | P30 g | C80 g | F4 g

SECTION 27

EXAMPLE DAYS

Two worked examples built from this guide. They show how the pieces fit, not a prescription. Scale portions to your own targets.

FAT LOSS DAY (ABOUT 2000 KCAL, 155 G PROTEIN)

MEAL	WHAT	KCAL	PROTEIN
Breakfast	Berry protein shake	480	39 g
Lunch	Seitan fajita wraps	660	49 g
Snack	Soya yoghurt and berries	135	9 g
Dinner	Seitan stir fry	610	47 g
Snack	Edamame (100 g)	120	11 g
TOTAL		**2005 kcal**	**155 g**

MUSCLE BUILDING DAY (ABOUT 3040 KCAL, 179 G PROTEIN)

MEAL	WHAT	KCAL	PROTEIN
Breakfast	Peanut butter protein porridge	640	40 g
Lunch	Tempeh and sweet potato traybake	710	38 g
Snack	Peanut butter on toast	285	12 g
Dinner	Lentil and soya bolognese	645	43 g
Snack	Almonds and banana	275	7 g
Shake	Berry protein shake	480	39 g
TOTAL		**3035 kcal**	**179 g**

VEGETARIAN? SWAP THESE

Use Greek yoghurt, cottage cheese, skyr, eggs or whey in place of soya yoghurt, tofu scramble or pea protein whenever you prefer. Everything else is already vegetarian friendly.

SECTION 28

PANTRY AND SHOPPING LIST

Keep a handful of staples in the cupboard, fridge and freezer and most meals in this guide are a short cook away.

PROTEIN

- Firm tofu and smoked tofu
- Tempeh and seitan
- Dry soya mince
- Tinned beans lentils and chickpeas
- Frozen edamame
- Soya yoghurt and pea protein
- Vegetarians: eggs Greek yoghurt cottage cheese skyr

CARBOHYDRATE

- Oats
- Rice and quinoa
- Pasta
- Potatoes and sweet potatoes
- Wholegrain bread and wraps
- Fruit and frozen berries

PLANTS

- Frozen vegetables
- Spinach and salad bags
- Tinned tomatoes and passata
- Peppers onions broccoli
- Garlic ginger and herbs

FATS AND FLAVOUR

- Olive oil or rapeseed oil
- Peanut butter and tahini
- Nuts and seeds
- Soy sauce miso and spices
- Nutritional yeast
- Stock cubes

FORTIFIED AND SUPPLEMENTS

- Fortified soya milk (calcium, B12, iodine)
- B12 supplement or reliable fortified foods
- Vitamin D in autumn and winter
- Algae omega 3 if you eat no fish
- Creatine monohydrate if using

SHOPPING TIPS

- Frozen and tinned foods are nutritious and cheap
- Buy beans and lentils in bulk
- Compare protein per 100 g on meat alternatives
- Plan 2 to 4 meals to prep each week

SIMPLE SYSTEM

Each week pick two proteins, two carbohydrates, three vegetables, one fruit and one sauce. Rotate them. That alone covers most meals.

SECTION 29

EATING OUT, TRAVEL AND SOCIAL

Plant-based eating works in the real world with a little forward planning.

EATING OUT

- Check the menu online before you go
- Choose a protein first, then add carbohydrate and vegetables
- Ask for extra beans, tofu or edamame if protein looks low
- Share a starter or side if you are hungry

GOOD CUISINE CHOICES

- Indian: dahl, chana masala, tofu or paneer dishes
- Thai and Chinese: tofu curries and stir fries with rice
- Mexican: bean burrito bowls
- Japanese: edamame, tofu, rice and vegetable dishes
- Italian: bean or lentil pasta, pizza with extra veg

TRAVEL AND BUSY DAYS

- Pack protein bars, roasted chickpeas, nuts and fruit
- Keep single serve pea protein sachets in your bag
- Supermarket meal deals: choose the bean, hummus or tofu option
- Pack your supplements with your wallet and keys

SOCIAL EVENTS

- Eat a protein rich meal beforehand if the options are limited
- Offer to bring a dish everyone can share
- One different meal does not change your progress
- Use the reset rule and move on

KEEP IT RELAXED

You do not need to explain or justify your food. Pick what you can enjoy, get your protein where you can, and carry on.

SECTION 30

COMMON MISTAKES AND TROUBLESHOOTING

Most problems on a plant-based diet are predictable. Spot them early and they are easy to fix.

COMMON MISTAKE	WHY IT HAPPENS	SIMPLE FIX
Not enough protein	Meals built on rice, pasta and vegetables	Add tofu, tempeh, seitan, soya mince, beans, soya yoghurt or a shake to each meal
Skipping B12	Not visible, so easy to forget	Pick a supplement or fortified routine and set a reminder
Under eating calories	High fibre foods are very filling	Add liquid calories, refined carbohydrates and measured oils or nut butters
Relying on ultra processed vegan foods	Convenient and tasty	They can fit. Check the protein, calories and portion size
Big jumps in fibre	Going all in on beans and wholegrains	Build up gradually and drink enough fluid
Guessing with iron or zinc	Fear of deficiency	Food first, test before supplementing
Over pouring oils and nuts	Easy to underestimate	Measure for a few weeks to learn portions
No plan for snacks	Hunger arrives at the wrong time	Keep protein rich snacks at home, work and in the gym bag

TROUBLESHOOTING TIRED OR FLAT

- Check energy and carbohydrate first
- Check B12, vitamin D and iron status with a professional if it persists
- Check sleep and training load

TROUBLESHOOTING BLOATING

- Increase fibre gradually
- Rinse canned beans and soak dried ones
- Spread beans across the day
- Seek advice if symptoms persist

SECTION 31

ACTION PLAN AND EVIDENCE

Turn the guide into a small number of behaviours you can repeat every week.

AREA	MY ACTION	HOW I WILL MEASURE IT	FREQUENCY
Protein	Include a plant or dairy/egg protein source at each main meal	Daily target or meal count	Daily
Fruit and veg	Include fruit or vegetables at most meals	Portions across the day	Daily
Fibre	Add one higher fibre food	Food choice or meal pattern	Daily
B12, vitamin D, iodine	Take or eat my chosen sources	Pill box or routine	Daily
Omega 3	Include ALA foods and consider algae oil	Food choice or supplement	Most days
Water	Carry a bottle and drink regularly	Bottle refills or routine	Daily
Training nutrition	Include carbohydrate around hard sessions when useful	Pre or post training meal	Training days
Meal prep	Prepare 2 to 4 reliable meals	Prepared portions available	Weekly
Weigh in average	Check my weekly average against my goal	Weekly average weight	Weekly
Sleep and recovery	Protect a consistent routine	Usual sleep and wake time	Daily

SELECTED EVIDENCE AND FURTHER READING

- NHS: Sugar guidance. Adults no more than 30 g free sugars per day.
- NHS: Fibre and healthy eating guidance. Adults around 30 g fibre per day.
- NHS: Vitamin D guidance. 10 micrograms daily in autumn and winter for adults.
- NHS: The vegan diet. Eat Well guidance.
- British Dietetic Association: Vegetarian, vegan and plant-based diets food fact sheet.
- British Dietetic Association: Omega 3 Food Fact Sheet.
- The Vegan Society: Vitamin B12 guidance.
- Morton et al. 2018. Protein supplementation and resistance training meta analysis. British Journal of Sports Medicine.
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- Messina et al. 2018. Soy protein versus animal protein and gains in muscle mass and strength with resistance exercise. International Journal of Sport Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism.
- Rogerson 2017. Vegan diets: practical advice for athletes and exercisers. Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition.
- Antonio et al. 2021. Common questions and misconceptions about creatine. Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition.
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General education only. Individual medical or dietetic advice may be required. Thanks for reading :)