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**IRON &
PROTEIN**
VEGETARIAN
NUTRITION

“Do you get enough protein?” and “Do you get enough iron?” are two of the most common questions asked of a veg~n. The answer to both is a definite yes.

“Appropriately planned vegetarian, including vegan, diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and may provide health benefits for the prevention and treatment of certain diseases. These diets are appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, adolescence, older adulthood, and for athletes.”

— Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2016

PROTEIN

Protein forms the building blocks of the body and it performs a wide range of functions like helping to build muscles, cell renewal, and growth. You can get plenty of protein in a plant based diet. Too much protein can lead to a number of serious health problems, such as kidney disease, some cancers, and osteoporosis.¹ The daily protein requirement, as recommended by the World Health Organisation, is 0.8 grams per kilogram of body weight. This translates to approximately²:

- Adult male – 64 grams
- Adult female – 46 grams
- Eight year old child – 35 grams

You can meet all your protein requirements from eating plant based food with the added advantage of not consuming saturated fats and cholesterol associated with animal protein. Almost every food has some protein in it. Refer to Table 1 for common foods and the quantity of protein they contain.

WHAT IF YOU'RE AN ATHLETE?

No problem. Many athletes have embraced a plant based diet and enhanced their sporting prowess. For example:

- Scott Jurek (ultra marathoner)
- Brendan Brazier (endurance athlete)
- Patrik Baboumian (bodybuilder)
- Heather Mills (skier)
- Dusan Dudas (New Zealand body builder)
- Elaine Brent (New Zealand triathlete)
- Mirko Buchwald (karate fifth-degree black belt)
- Carl Lewis (sprinting world champion)
- Lewis Hamilton (Formula One world champion)
- David Hayes (heavyweight boxer)

“While athletes’ protein needs are greater than that of non-athletes, they’re not as high as commonly perceived. The recommendation is 1.2 to 2.0 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight per day for athletes, depending on training. Protein intake should be spaced throughout the day and after workouts”

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics,
Dietitians of Canada and the American
College of Sports Medicine



SYLVIA PHILCOX

IMAGE CREDIT: ROCHEL NILENDRA

QUANTITY OF Protein & Iron IN COMMON PLANT BASED FOODS

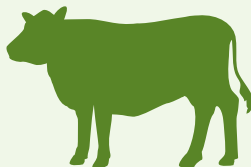
TABLE 1

PLANT BASED FOOD	PROTEIN (g)	IRON (mg)
Tofu (100g)	14.2	1.8
Lentils (1 cup, cooked)	15.3	4.8
Oats (1 cup, raw)	12.6-16.1	3.7-6.9
Chickpeas (1 cup, cooked)	9.2	3.1
Pumpkin Seeds (30g)	9.7	2.6
Nutritional Yeast, Bragg (2 tbsp)	5	1
Soy Milk (1 cup)	7.3	3.2
Almonds (30g)	6.6	1.4
Quinoa (1 cup, cooked)	6.4	2.2
Brown Rice (1 cup, cooked)	4.8	0.6
Broccoli (1 cup)	3.6	0.6
Dried prune (10)	2.4	0.9
Dark chocolate (30g)	1.5	0.6
Marmite (1 tsp)	1	2.4
Wholemeal bread (2 slices)	8.5-12.5	1.2-1.8
Sundried tomato (30g)	4.6	2.7

(New Zealand Food Composition Tables, 13th Edition 2018.)

TIP: When you want a quick and easy protein rich snack grab a handful of nuts, crackers and hummus, or make a smoothie.

**“PEOPLE EAT MEAT AND THINK
THEY WILL BECOME
STRONG AS AN OX,
FORGETTING THAT
THE OX EATS GRASS.”**



PINO CARUSO

IRON

We need iron for oxygen delivery (via haemoglobin), growth, muscles, nerves, digestion and energy levels. Iron is an essential mineral and plays an important role in both immunity and concentration. You can easily meet all your iron requirements on a plant based diet.

There are two types of iron: haem and non-haem. Haem iron is found in meat and non-haem is found in foods of plant origin. Non-haem iron is the main form of dietary iron: iron is often associated with red meat, but “even for non-vegetarians, most iron in the Australian diet comes from plant foods rather than meat. Less than 20% of iron intake comes from meat and meat products and about 40% comes from cereals and cereal products. The same is true in the United Kingdom, where 45% of dietary iron comes from cereals and cereal products and less than 20% comes from meat and meat products.”³

VITAMIN C

Vitamin C helps increase the absorption of non-haem iron, so include vitamin C rich foods such as oranges, kiwifruit, tomatoes, peppers, kale and broccoli as part of your meal.

The absorption of non-haem iron is also affected by the presence of other foods in the gut. Tannins (tea and coffee), calcium and phosvitin (eggs) all hinder the absorption of iron. Wholegrains including those in bread, contain phytates which can also hinder the absorption of iron.



The RDI of iron for a woman is 18 milligrams per day; for a man, 8 milligrams. Refer to Table 1 for common foods and the iron they contain.

Many people, including meat eaters, suffer from iron deficiency. In fact, the incidence of iron-deficiency anaemia among veg~ns is no different from that of non-vegetarians.⁴ Pregnant women, young children and the elderly are more susceptible to it. Some signs of iron deficiency are tiredness and fatigue, anxiety and an inability to focus, a pale complexion and gums and/or cracked lips, and frequent infections. Children and women need more iron than men. Most people are able to get all the iron they need from a varied and balanced diet, but consult a health professional if you are concerned about your iron intake. If taking an iron supplement, choose carefully because some can be constipating and having too much iron can be as bad for you as too little.

You can meet all your iron and protein requirements from a wholefood, plant based veg~n diet. Not only does a veg~n diet taste great, but it helps make the world a kinder, healthier place.

References

1. A. O. N. A. D. American Dietetic Association, "Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Vegetarian Diets, Position Paper." [www.andjrn.org/article/S2212-2672\(16\)31192-3/pdf](http://www.andjrn.org/article/S2212-2672(16)31192-3/pdf), 2016.
2. Joint WHO/FAO expert consultation, "Diet, nutrition and the prevention of chronic diseases." WHO Technical Report Series No. 916 (TRS 916).
3. A. C. W. B. S. a. P. J. S. Saunders, "Iron and vegetarian diets." *MJA Open*. doi: 10.5694/mjao11.11494, 2012.
4. B. M. B. MJ, "Dietary intake and iron status of Australian vegetarian women," *Am J Clin Nutr.*, Vols. 70, 71, pp. 353-358, 94-102, 1999, 2000.

**HAPPY
THOUGHT
FOR THE
DAY...**

**DARK CHOCOLATE
CONTAINS IRON!**

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