

## The Real Deal, The Vegan Lifestyle ...

Vegan diets have become increasingly popular in recent years especially in the fitness nation. Following a plant based diet needs some education to ensure no deficiency exist? Let's break down what a Traditional vegan diet is, this is a plant based diet which excludes all animal products including items derived from an animal source (gelatin and honey). Animal protein holds many benefits such as iron and b12 vitamins leading some vegans towards what are known as flexitarian diet allowing a select amount of animal products to ensure proper nutrition is met. When planned appropriately a vegan meal plan can meet all daily requirements. The benefits of a vegan lifestyle tend to be lower in saturated fats and high in fiber, vitamin C and E and contain a wide range of phytochemicals. The problem lies with the low Intake of protein, calcium, iron and vitamin D. So how can we fix this? First let's explore what we need.

**Protein:** maintains and builds muscle be sure to try for 0.5 to 0.8 grams per pound of body weight. Beware vegans can get up to 10% more than this due to all the plant based protein sources. The wrong type of protein is being stored.

**Vitamin B12:** A traditional vegan diet is low in B12 because this vitamin is found in animal products. B12 helps nerve function, keeping cells healthy and preventing anemia. Try to shoot for 2.4mcg a day from soy milks and energy bars which are fortified.

**Calcium:** Intake must hit optimal levels of 1000 to 1300mg for proper bone strength. The number one injury to a vegan lifestyle is bone fractures. Increase your tofu, broccoli and fortified juices to ensure allowance is met.

**Iron:** Is essential to delivery of oxygen to cells when iron is low fatigue can set in. Try to keep in mind plant based iron does not absorb as well as animal protein making it harder to store. Knowing this the vegan recommended intake is 1.8 times higher at 32 mg than the non-vegan at 18mg of iron.

**Last Vitamin D:** This micronutrient plays a key role in bone health and immune system function. Vegan levels are often low due to food choices and this to combine with calcium deficiency can increase bone fractures by double. Immune system weakening and over all lower bone mass can result.

So how can we further fix this situation? Well here are the top 10 food choices that will help any Vegan hit their daily recommended needs:

1. Tofu
2. Soy or almond milk
3. Nuts, seeds and nut butters
4. Beans
5. Lentils
6. Fresh fruit
7. Veggies
8. Healthy whole grains
9. Vegan sports bars (kind, lara and clif)
10. Dark Chocolate (rich antioxidants)