

How to Painlessly Transition to Vegetarian

Take Time to Become Vegetarian Gradually with These Transition Tips

By **Melanie Graysmith**

Finally ready to take the leap to becoming a vegetarian? Has every magazine you've picked up lately had at least one article on the benefits of a vegetarian diet? More and more it seems we read about the health and cost benefits of being vegetarian, while many people think about those benefits too. They may seriously think about becoming vegetarian, but are worried about it being too hard, too limited, or too anything else for them to follow. These are all natural concerns for lifelong meat eaters. If making the switch to a plant-based diet occupies your mind, here are some tips to help make the transition to being vegetarian easier.

Have Good Reasons to Change

Think about why you want to make the change to a vegetarian lifestyle. Have one or more solid reasons for your change; whether to improve health, have a lifestyle change, reduce animal suffering or any other personal reason, it's important to know why you want to become vegetarian. Having a clear vision for your transition encourages motivation - the motivation needed for success. Becoming vegetarian can be difficult for some people and easier for others. The "cool" factor is not reason enough. Make it real.

Easy Does It

Start slow and fill the gaps. Try going for two weeks and then four weeks without any beef, chicken or pork. Try replacing meat with "new meat" stand-ins, such as tofu, portabella mushrooms or fish. While officially fish is not part of a vegetarian diet, it does leave the body feeling lighter than meats, and is a good transition replacement while becoming accustomed to what it feels like to go veggie.

Make Substitutions

It is relatively simple to create satisfying meals that both agree with the vegetarian philosophy plus are as enjoyable and pleasing as meat based foods. Soy and bean substitutes are available in many forms, from preformed hamburger, hot dog or sausage look-alikes to various seasoned tofu blocks to add to dishes for texture and flavor.

There are many vegetarians however who do not want to replicate meat flavors and textures. For them, abandoning meat, chicken and fish means living without these flavors in their lives, and they have no interest in the fakes. The more desirable chewy substitutes for them, and popular with vegetarians in general, are mushrooms, especially portabellas, and all varieties of eggplants, which give amazing results to many ethnic dishes.

Different Types of Vegetarian

There are different types of vegetarians. Some people who identify as vegetarian may alternate between the different types, especially when they first make the transition over to vegetarian.

Vegetarians do not eat meat, poultry, or fish.

Lacto-ovo vegetarians eat eggs and milk.

Lacto-vegetarians eat dairy products, but not eggs.

Vegans do not eat any animal products at all, including honey. In addition, vegans do not use any form of animal by-products such as eggs, dairy products, honey, or wear leather, fur, silk, wool, or use cosmetics and soaps derived from animal products. The challenge for vegans is to get enough calories, proteins, vitamins and minerals for a healthy diet. Making informed decisions about meal planning is crucial, and should quickly become second nature.

Zen Habits: How to Become a Vegetarian, the Easy Way

<http://zenhabits.net/how-to-become-a-vegetarian-the-easy-way/>

Tips For Going Vegetarian

http://www.savvyvegetarian.com/svreports/10_tips_for_becoming_vegetarian.pdf

The Vegetarian Resource Group

<http://www.vrg.org/nutshell/vegan.htm>