

These nutritional guidelines have been put together by Registered Dietitians from Centrepoint to provide information for staff and volunteers at food banks and food aid providers. They are evidence-based, affordable, and can be used to support beneficiaries to receive a nutritionally balanced parcel of food which takes individual needs such as health conditions, culture and kitchen facilities into account, within the means of the food bank.



There are different types of vegetarian diets so it is important to check which foods are acceptable for different people. Generally speaking, vegetarians do not eat any meat, game, poultry, fish, shellfish or animal by-products such as gelatine. Some products will have a **V** symbol, which means it is vegetarian.

A varied and balanced vegetarian diet can provide all the nutrients required to be healthy but due to its restrictive nature it needs to be well planned. The Vegetarian Eat-well Guide shows which food groups should be included.

It is important the diet contains enough energy and protein as well as foods that are good sources of other essential nutrients your body needs to avoid nutritional deficiencies. The key ones to watch out for are;

- **Protein**, found in beans, pulses, nuts, soya, eggs, and other vegetarian alternatives
- **Calcium**, found in dairy, fortified plant milks, and bread.
- **Iron**, found in wholegrains, beans, pulses and dried fruits like raisins.
- **B12**, found in dairy, fortified plant milk, marmite and fortified cereals.

Top tip: Look out for products which are 'fortified', meaning extra nutrients have been added to the product. This helps vegetarians to meet their nutritional requirements.

The following questions may be useful to ask the service user, if you have the ability to further tailor their parcel:

- Are there any foods that you do not like/ do not eat? – *you can tailor parcel to their preferences*
- Which kind of milk do you prefer? – *if they avoid/dislike dairy consider an alternative such as soya milk to provide enough calcium*
- Have you ever used beans, lentils or pulses before? – *these are great sources of protein and iron so encouraging their use may be beneficial*
- Which cooking facilities do you have available to you? – *fridge, hob, tin opener, kettle, microwave etc.*
- Do have any other dietary restrictions or cultural preferences? – *See other guidelines for more information*



Vegetarian Guidelines

INDEPENDENT
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NETWORK

The following food items are all suitable for vegetarians, try to include some from each group:

Protein-rich foods:

- Tinned or dried lentils
- Tinned pulses e.g. baked beans, chickpeas, butter beans, etc.
- Seeds – e.g. pumpkin, flax seed
- Nuts and nut butters
- Tofu (long life)
- Packets of long life falafel or vegetarian burger mix
- Pickled eggs
- Protein bars or shakes

Carbohydrate-rich foods:

- Pasta, noodles, couscous, rice, quinoa and other grains
- Oats and fortified cereals
- Bread products e.g. wraps, naan, pitta bread, crackers
- Tinned potatoes
- Flour (all types)
- Microwave grains

Fruits and vegetables:

- Tinned vegetables e.g. tomatoes, sweetcorn, ratatouille, peas
- Tinned fruit e.g. pineapple
- Long Life Fruit Juice
- Jars of vegetables e.g. olives
- Tinned vegetable soup e.g. lentil
- Dried fruits e.g. raisins, apricots
- Pastes and purees e.g. tomato puree, garlic paste, ginger paste
- Bottled lemon or lime juice

Dairy and alternatives:

- UHT dairy milk
- UHT fortified plant based milks such as soya, oat, almond (check the label for added calcium)
- Soya based desserts
- Custard (tinned or long life packet)
- Rice pudding
- Milk powder
- Ambient oat or soy cream
- Ready to drink protein drinks

Other items:

Oil and vinegar (ask for preference if possible), vegetable stock cubes, salt, pepper, seasonings, herbs and spices. Pasta or curry sauces (check label for pesto), condiments e.g. soy sauce, hot sauce, mustard. Hot drinks like tea, coffee, hot chocolate. Snacks: choose high protein options e.g. oat biscuits, flapjacks.

If you have access to fresh or frozen food you could also add:

Any fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables, starchy tubers like potatoes, yam, cassava, bread products, any dairy products such as cheese, milk or yogurt, eggs, hummus. Vegetarian substitutes e.g. veggie sausages, burgers, mince.

An example 3 day parcel could include:

- 1x box of fortified breakfast cereal
- 1x carton of UHT milk
- Snack boxes of raisins
- 1x carton of fruit juice
- 1x tin of lentil soup
- 1x tin of kidney beans
- 1 x tin of chickpeas
- 1x packet of dried pasta
- 1x jar of pasta sauce
- 4x tins of vegetables
- 2x tins of chopped tomatoes
- 1x packet of rice
- 1x bottle of oil
- 1x small pack of tofu
- 1 x tin of custard
- 1x packet of mixed nuts
- 1x box of cereal bars/biscuits
- 1 x box of crackers
- 1x packet of tea or coffee
- 1x tin of fruit in water
- 1 x pack of seasoning

If the service user would like any recipe ideas, many of the recipes available on the IFAN website are suitable for vegetarians.

For more information on vegetarian diets go to: <https://vegsoc.org/> or <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/plant-based-diet.html>