

Vegan Nutrition

A basic guide for vegan strength athletes

www.veganbodybuilding.org

Getting your nutrition right is one of the three things you have to achieve if you want to reach your strength goals (the other two being **recovery & training**). The fundamentals of a healthy strength training diet are really simple & most people already know the basics:

- ✓ Don't eat junk
- ✓ Eat plenty of fresh fruit & vegetables
- ✓ Drink plenty of water
- ✓ If you want to gain weight, eat *slightly* more than you need to maintain your present weight
- ✓ If you want to lose weight, eat *slightly* less than you need to maintain your present weight



(Pat Reeves winning at the 2003 British Powerlifting championships)

The Big Three dietary systems



(Robbie Hazeley)

There are three distinct types of diet that are used in Bodybuilding. Each, of course, can be sub-divided, but for our purposes these 3 basic systems will be looked at:

What are the 3 basic systems?

Your diet will vary if you are trying to **diet**, trying to **grow** or trying to **maintain** your body weight.

What do they have in common?

All of the 3 systems rely on you eating many small meals throughout the day (as many as 7-8 meals, eating one every 2 hours) & consuming a large quantity of water. Eating only healthy food (not junk). Monitoring your weight & your body-fat levels (remember you can weigh MORE, but have less fat).

Maintenance



	Men	Women	Protein	1.4g/Kg	.64g/lb
Calories/Kg	44	38-44	Carbohydrates	7g/Kg	3.2g/lb
Calories/pound	20	17-20	Fat	1.1g/Kg	.52g/lb

Diet



	Men	Women	Protein	2g/Kg	.91g/lb
Calories/Kg	38	35	Carbohydrates	6g/Kg men 11/Kg wom	2.7g/lb men 5g/lb wom
Calories/pound	17	16	Fat	1.1g/Kg	.52/lb

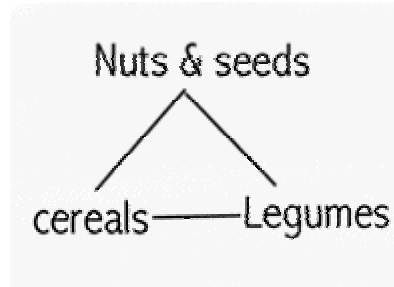
Growth



	Men	Women	Protein	1.6g/Kg	.73g/lb
Calories/Kg	52+	44-52	Carbohydrates	8g/Kg	3.6g/lb
Calories/pound	24+	20-24	Fat	1.5g/Kg	.68g/lb

Veganism & protein

Protein: - now there's a word you hear occasionally in the bodybuilding world! There are 3 main types of protein sources for a vegan this is usually called the protein pyramid:



In the old days it was assumed that all vegans needed to have complimentary proteins with every meal. That is to mix a combination of two of the three protein sources above in any meal (i.e. Beans on toast - beans are a legume and toast is a cereal), as the amino acids in vegetable proteins are not balanced, they usually contain one (or more) amino acid in a low quantity and the human body can only absorb amino acids in proportion to each other, so you lose a lot of goodness, this was found to be not true in studies of vegans. However no studies have ever (to my knowledge) been done on vegan bodybuilders, so perhaps as a precaution you should try to eat from two or more groups with every meal or at minimum daily.



For cheapness there is always dry TVP (sometimes called TSP) which is dry processed soya that can be used as chunks or minced. Wholemeal bread is not only quite high in protein but contains fibre and vitamin E. Also nuts and nut butters go well as snacks and sandwiches, and don't forget soya milk for mixing those after exercise drinks.

Another good source of protein is yeast that you can buy as a spread or flakes. Natex make a reduced salt version of yeast spread that is a good alternate to Marmite or vegemite, and Marigold make some yeast

flakes called Engevita that you can sprinkle onto food and of course there is always brewers yeast in both pill and powder form. All forms should be available from your local health food store.

Other nutrients: - Some other nutrients that often come up are *calcium* (used in the contraction of muscles and making bones and teeth amongst other things), *vitamin B12* and *iodine*:

Calcium: - Although calcium intake in adult vegans is often lower than in omnivores, there appears to be an increase in the absorption of the mineral in the intestine that offsets the difference as no difference in blood levels of the mineral have been found nor have there ever been any reported cases of deficiency in vegan adults.

Vitamin B12(cobalamins): - It is not necessary to eat B12 every day as the liver can store 3-6 years worth of the vitamin also the body can to a great extent recycle the stores of the vitamin and increase absorption when supplies are low. Although many people show no signs of deficiency after years, this does not mean that the body has adequate levels of B12 & you could be suffering from elevated homocysteine levels. Of course, you can't 'see' homocysteine levels, but they are a sign of deficiency nonetheless and may do significant harm to vegans. I recommend that everyone eat fortified foods or take a supplement to insure adequate levels of B12. My views on B12 have changed recently due to new research. I used to believe that B12 could be obtained from yeast products, edible seaweed, tempeh, miso, but now I have doubts, as research points towards these products **not** having B12 in them, but analogues, that appear to the body as B12, but infact do not function as B12 & actually block B12 receptors.

Iodine: - Edible seaweed is the most reliable source of iodine. There is also iodine in vegetables and grains (the amount depends on where the crop was grown). On this note the reason that most meat and dairy products have iodine in them is the fact that they supplement the animals so you could say that you are eating iodine pills one step removed.

Other foods: - You must remember to eat plenty of fresh vegetables and fruit everyday to get all your trace element to allow growth. Of special significance here is vitamin C due to the form of iron that vegans consume when compared to meat eaters. Meat eaters get a source of iron called heme iron from meat. This form of iron is much easier to absorb than the non-heme iron found in vegetables. Eating a diet that is high in vitamin C increases the absorption of non-heme iron, as does citric acid and other fruit acids.

When to eat?



This is pretty much standard fare for the bodybuilding world 6-8 meals (that's 3 or 4 big meals and 3 or 4 snacks) a day at 2 hour intervals (or thereabouts) will be more than enough. Being sure to eat nutritious food, not junk. Always think the day before, or that morning "Do I need to make anything to take with me". One thing I read was when you are preparing food always make a big pot full and freeze some in individual portions for later. When you haven't got time to cook this can be a lifesaver!

Another important point is to eat (or drink a shake) within 60-90 minutes after exercise, as your body needs nutrients at that time and will grow much better if it is fed at that time.

While we are on the subject, WATER. Water is so important that it can't be over stressed. Drink a lot (I mean A LOT!) of it. We all do it. We go out and get thirsty half way to somewhere. Take some water wherever you go. If you want an idea of how much I mean, then I would recommend a MINIMUM of 8 pints (preferably 12). You cannot (under normal circumstances) drink too much.

Final Points

With a little planning & forethought it is easy to meet your dietary needs as a vegan strength athlete. If you follow the basic system outlined above, train hard & organise your recovery plan correctly you can achieve fantastic gains in strength &/or size.

