



## FOOD MATTERS

with Consultant Nutritionist Sue Radd

# SHOULD YOU GO VEGETARIAN?

Appropriately planned vegetarian diets, including total vegetarian or vegan, are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and may help in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases, according to a new position paper of the American Dietetic Association. This is good news for the 2.3 percent of U.S. adults who are vegetarian and the increasing number of meat eaters choosing meatless meals more often for health or environmental reasons.

### health advantages

A vegetarian diet could be your meal ticket to a healthier, happier life. Research shows vegetarian diets are linked with a number of health advantages including lower blood cholesterol and pressure and a reduced risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and overall cancer. A smaller number of studies also show benefits for dementia, diverticulitis, gallstones, and rheumatoid arthritis. So what are you waiting for?

### foods that deliver

As there is only so much room on the plate, by going vegetarian you get more of the tried and tested superfoods.

**Nuts and seeds:** Enjoying these four to five times per week lowers the risk of

heart attack by about 50 percent and type 2 diabetes by 27 percent.

**Legumes:** Cooking these in place of meat will protect you against diabetes, certain cancers, and help lower your cholesterol. While best known for their high protein, dried beans have the lowest glycemic index (GI) of any food group and are loaded with fiber.

**Whole grains:** Including just three servings per day lowers the risk of diabetes by 20 to 30 percent and improves blood-sugar control if you have diabetes.

**Vegetables and fruits:** Eating five to ten servings daily significantly lowers blood pressure and guards against obesity and cancer.

### getting it right

While you can meet all your nutritional requirements with a plant-based diet, vegetarians who also avoid dairy products may have a reduced intake of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, calcium, vitamin D, zinc, and the long chain omega-3s.

A visit to a registered dietitian experienced in vegetarian nutrition makes good sense for new vegetarians, those making poor dietary choices, or undergoing stages of life such as pregnancy and infancy.

Nutritionist Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and coauthor of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See [www.sueradd.com](http://www.sueradd.com) for more nutrition information.