

Vegan Meal Planning for Optimal Blood Sugar

Introduction

- Who I am
- Why vegan? Is it safe to follow a vegan diet as a diabetic?
- Can vegans get enough protein to be healthy?
- Do vegans get too much carbohydrate to manage as a diabetic?
- How to plan meals and snacks to prevent blood sugar spikes or dips?



HEATHER NICHOLDS

Registered Holistic Nutritionist

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Heather Nicholds, Registered Holistic Nutritionist



I'm a Registered Holistic Nutritionist, but I don't work in a clinic. I share my recipes, nutrition advice, and motivation through videos and online programs and services.

I was drawn to a healthy vegan lifestyle after learning about the environmental impacts of industrial food production. There are a million and one reasons that I continue to choose the things I choose in this life every single day, but that was my tipping point. I realized I could do something to make a difference. Something that was entirely under my control.

I've never had as much fun cooking and eating as I do now! I never feel restricted or deprived, I feel liberated and luxurious with all the wonderful foods I eat and the things I do.

After shifting to a healthy vegan lifestyle, I had more energy, I lost some extra weight without trying, and I didn't have chronic gas or digestion issues. I had no idea that this was how I was supposed to feel! I didn't realize how bad I felt until I felt better.

You have the power to make all of this magic happen in your life, too. All you need to do is be open to receiving it.



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Why Vegan?

ETHICAL

Avoid animal slaughter, cruelty, exploitation as much as practical and possible

Vegan diet avoids all animal flesh and products (eggs, dairy, honey), vegan lifestyle also avoids leather, wool, cosmetics that test on animals, etc.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Make huge contribution towards lowering GHG emissions (including methane), reducing water usage, rainforest destruction, waste production, ocean dead zones, etc

A vegan diet produces the equivalent of 50% less carbon dioxide, uses 1/11th oil, 1/13th water, and 1/18th land compared to a meat-based diet.

Each day, a person who eats a vegan diet saves 1,100 gallons of water, 45 pounds of grain, 30 sq ft of forested land, 20 lbs CO2 equivalent

HEALTH

Plant foods have been shown to promote health in many different ways, including preventing insulin resistance and diabetes. Plant foods have less accumulated toxins than animal foods since they're lower on the food chain, and can give us all the nutrients we need to be healthy.



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“Is it safe for someone with diabetes to follow a vegetarian diet?”

“Yes! A vegetarian diet is a healthy option, even if you have diabetes. Research supports that following this type of diet can help prevent and manage diabetes. In fact, research on vegan diets has found that carbohydrate and calorie restrictions were not necessary and still promoted weight loss and lowered participants’ A1C.

Vegan diets are naturally higher in fiber, much lower in saturated fat, and cholesterol-free when compared to a traditional American diet. The high fiber in this diet may help you feel full for a longer time after eating and may help you eat less over all. When fiber intake is greater than 50 grams per day on a vegan diet, it may help lower blood glucose levels.

This diet also tends to cost less. Meat, poultry, and fish are usually the most expensive foods we eat.”

Reference: American Diabetes Association <http://www.diabetes.org/food-and-fitness/food/planning-meals/meal-planning-for-vegetarians>



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“What about a vegan diet?”

“This is also called the total or pure vegetarian diet. Those who follow a vegan diet do not eat any meat or foods made with meat products.

People with diabetes can choose to follow this type of vegetarian diet too. The vegan diet includes a variety of plant-based foods. Eating soy products and a mix of vegetables, fruits, beans, and whole grains provides plenty of protein and other important nutrients. The main nutrient of concern for this group is vitamin B12, so taking a supplement or multi-vitamin is usually necessary.”

Reference: American Diabetes Association <http://www.diabetes.org/food-and-fitness/food/planning-meals/meal-planning-for-vegetarians>



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Myth: “Vegans can’t get enough protein.”

- Recommended daily intake (RDI) is 10-20% of calories from protein
- Women’s RDI is about 55-60 grams, and men’s is about 65-70 grams
- Average vegan meal plan has 12-15% calories from protein
- At standard average of 2000 calories, that gives 60-75 grams per day
- Athletes can boost above 15% if necessary by focusing on higher protein foods and using plant-based protein powders (or pregnancy, breastfeeding, pre-/post-surgery)



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Vegan protein sources:

- **Beans, legumes:** chickpeas, lentils, kidney, black, edamame, tofu 20-30% protein
- **Whole grains:** oats, wheat, spelt, rye, barley 5-10% protein
- **Pseudograins:** quinoa, buckwheat, amaranth 10-15% protein
- **Dark green leafy vegetables:** collards, parsley, broccoli, spinach 20-30% protein
- **Nuts and seeds:** almonds, cashews, Brazil, pumpkin, sunflower 15-20% protein



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Myth: “Vegan foods are too carb-heavy for diabetics”

Because diabetes is an inability to properly regulate blood sugar, and carbohydrates are converted directly to sugar in our bodies, there is a prevailing misconception that plant foods are unsuitable for diabetics.

The truth is that the problem comes from refined sugars, refined flours, and other refined carbohydrates, along with high-glycemic fruits and grains - whole food vegans tend to eat less of these foods than meat eaters.

There is a wide range of plant foods that are not only suitable but beneficial for blood sugar regulation. The key is to choose the foods that are unrefined carbohydrates, which will include all of the natural fiber, water, and nutrients that help modulate the release of sugar into the blood stream and promote better insulin sensitivity.

There is just as much chance that a meat eater could eat an inappropriately high-glycemic meal as a vegan.



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Squash

Carbohydrates come in the form of polysaccharides which include special compounds called homogalacturonan that have antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-diabetic and insulin-regulating properties.

Chickpeas

The type of fiber gives us better blood fat regulation, lower levels of LDL-cholesterol, total cholesterol, and triglycerides, blood sugar and insulin secretion, metabolized by bacteria in the colon to produce compounds that act as fuel to the cells that line your intestinal wall to help lower your risk of colon problems and colon cancer.



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Glycemic Index (GI)

A measure of the blood glucose-raising potential of the carbohydrate content of a food compared to a reference food. Carbohydrate-containing foods can be classified as high- (≥ 70), moderate- (56-69), or low-GI (≤ 55) relative to pure glucose (GI=100)

Glycemic Load (GL)

Obtained by multiplying the quality of carbohydrate in a given food (GI) by the amount of carbohydrate in a serving of that food. Food classified as high- (≥ 20), moderate- (11-19), or low-GI (≤ 10).

Glycemic index of watermelon is the same as a donut, at 76 (high), and less than a Coke, at 63.

Glycemic load of watermelon is 4 (low), donut is 17 (moderate), Coke is 16.

Glycemic Load of Meals or Diets

The glycemic load of a meal would combine all foods in the meal, for their respective GI and serving size. Lowering the glycemic load of a meal can be done by combining foods, like grains with beans or fruits with nuts.

Reference: <http://ipi.oregonstate.edu/mic/food-beverages/glycemic-index-glycemic-load>
http://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/glycemic_index_and_glycemic_load_for_100_foods



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	GI	Serving	GL
Oatmeal	55	250	13
Cornflakes	93	30	23
Couscous	65	150	9
Quinoa	53	150	13
White rice	73	150	43
Brown rice	68	150	16
White pasta	46	180	22
Whole wheat pasta	42	180	17
White bagel	72	70	25
Pumpernickel bread	56	30	7
White bread	71	30	10
Whole wheat bread	70	30	9

	GI	Serving	GL
Chickpeas	10	150	3
Hummus	6	30	0
Lentils	29	150	5
Black beans	30	150	7
Cashews	27	50	3
Peanuts	7	50	0
Green peas	51	80	4
Carrots	35	80	2
Parsnips	52	80	4
Squash	51	80	3
White potato	82	150	21
Sweet potato	70	150	22

	GI	Serving	GL
Apple	39	120	6
Banana	62	120	16
Dates	42	60	18
Grapefruit	25	120	3
Grapes	59	120	4
Orange	40	120	4
Peach	42	120	5
Pear	38	120	4
Raisins	64	60	28
Watermelon	72	120	4
Coca Cola	62	250	16
Apple juice	44	250	30
Orange	50	250	4



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Meal Planning

- Combine foods in a meal to make sure the overall glycemic load is low or moderate
- Ensure adequate fiber content to slow blood sugar release (i.e. no juice, smoothies?)
- Eat at regular intervals - don't snack too often, but don't go too long without food which causes low blood sugar - choose healthy low-glycemic snack options
- Avoid added sweeteners of any kind, other than stevia
- Think in terms of portions, rather than calories



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Healthy Vegan Portion Guide

Food Group	Serving Size	Average Portions	Notes
Vegetables	1 cup chopped	4+ per day	
Leafy Greens	1 cup chopped	1+ per day	Broccoli & cauliflower can count here
Fruit	1 cup chopped	1-2+ per day	
Grains	1 cup cooked whole grains, 1 slice bread, 1/2 bagel	2-3 per day	With cooked whole grains, the serving size depends on the amount of water used in cooking
Beans/Legumes	1 cup cooked	1-2 per day	Quinoa can count as a serving of beans, as can 2 Tbsp of peanut butter
Nuts & Seeds	1 Tablespoon	2-4 per day	Include 1 Tbsp of flax or chia each day
Spices	1 teaspoon	1+ per day	
Water	1 cup	12 per day	



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Meal	Outline	Meal Ideas
Breakfast: Reboot.	Whole Grain: complex carbs for energy through the day + Nuts/seeds: add protein & fat to carry energy further	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • porridge with low-GL fruit and chia seeds • whole grain toast with peanut/almond butter banana • could have plant-based protein powder mixed with non-dairy milk
Between breakfast & lunch: hydrate!	Aim for 2L throughout the day Pre-lunch could have a fiber supplement mixed with water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water • fruit-infused water • tea
Lunch: Fuel.	Beans and/or whole grains + green veg (leafy greens, broccoli, cauliflower, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • big salad with beans • veggie soup with beans and/or brown rice or soba noodles • whole grain bread/wrap with hummus and veggies
Afternoon snack: Replenish.	Ensure you're not starving for dinner, boost your energy before getting into cooking dinner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fruit + nuts • hummus + veg • H2O!!!
Dinner: Nourish.	Starchy veg (squash, sweet potato, potato, parsnip, etc) + Non-starchy veg (onions, tomatoes, cucumber, etc) + Green veg (greens, broccoli, cauliflower)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • big salad with roasted veg and tahini dressing • steamed veggie bowl with avocado dressing • roasted squash/sweet potato soup with pumpkin seeds
Dessert: Wind down.	Sugar-free treat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fruity or minty herbal tea • chia pudding • avocado-based dessert



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Download class slides + recipe package

PDF resource for you: heathernicholds.com/diabetes



Cleanse your body naturally with a 3-Day Veggie Tune-Up program

This is not an extreme detox, this is a nutritionally-balanced meal plan designed to cleanse your body naturally. There's a veggie version, to help rebalance your blood sugar with low-glycemic, alkalizing meals including healthy whole food fats.

The cleanse program includes:

- Recipes for all meals and snacks
- Grocery list to get you sorted for the whole week with no food waste
- Dynamic portion calculator specific to your energy needs and weight goals

heathernicholds.com/cleanse



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