

M&S
— FOOD —

sparkling
change.

The Challenge

Protein from plants:
nutritional advice
and top tips

Switching to a more plant-based diet doesn't need to be a challenge - check out our tips for making a delicious and nutritious change today!

Protein is essential for growth and repair of the body and maintenance of good health, as well as providing us with energy. Meat and dairy are a rich source of important nutrients such as protein, calcium, iodine, iron, vitamin B12 and zinc. But with a little planning, a diet with less or even no meat and dairy can include all the nutrients you need.

Boosting the plant protein in your diet doesn't have to mean completely restricting meat, fish and dairy. Small shifts to **reduce meat and dairy and increasing vegetables, pulses, nuts seeds, wholegrains and fruit** can help achieve a diet that is better for you and the planet.

When making any significant changes, such as reducing your meat and dairy intake, it's always important to consider the nutrients your body needs which may be less readily available in plants.

What is protein, exactly?

Different foods contain different amounts and combinations of amino acids, which are the building blocks of proteins. Protein from animal sources such as meat, fish, eggs and dairy contain the full range of essential amino acids that our bodies need. We call these foods complete proteins.

To get the same benefits from a more plant-based diet, we just need to eat a variety of plant-based proteins such as cereals and pulses together. This allows the proteins to complement each other and compensate for the limitations of the other.

A great example are grains and legumes, such as pasta and peas, or beans and wholemeal bread. You don't need to combine different plant proteins in every single meal as the body maintains a pool of amino acids – but it's important to eat a variety of different plant proteins from day to day.

Our guide to more protein from plants

Top plant-based protein sources



Pulses:
lentils, chickpeas



Grains:
wheat flour, bread,
rice, oatmeal,
pasta, quinoa



Beans:
kidney beans, baked
beans, broad beans,
soya beans (tofu)



Nuts:
almonds, walnuts,
hazelnuts, peanuts



Vegetables:
peas, mushrooms,
broccoli, kale,
sweetcorn



Seeds:
chia seeds,
sunflower seeds

Top tips for more plant-based eating



Combine a variety of plant-based proteins

Try combining cereals such as rice and pasta with beans or lentils, wholegrains, and nuts such as peanut butter on wholemeal toast for complementing proteins. You can do this in the same meal, but you don't have to.



Veg out

Add extra beans, veg, pulses, nuts and seeds to curries, casseroles, pasta dishes or soup instead of meat. Try a delicious [aubergine, olive and butterbean cassoulet](#).



Inspiration

You'll find a wealth of plant-based recipes online and in an ever-increasing number of plant powered cookbooks. Cuisines well-known for vegetarian cooking, such as India for an [aromatic dahl](#) or Italy for a [green bean and spinach risotto](#).



Meaty veg

If you love meat but want to eat less of it, seek out vegetables such as aubergines and mushrooms. They mimic the texture of meat and seasoning with soy sauce, smoked paprika, or miso can give that savoury hit. Try this [shiitake, miso and spring onion ramen](#).



Don't forget about fibre

Add a portion of grains and pulses as an easy and delicious way to bulk out your meal, fill you up and include important nutrients in the diet, such as fibre. Aim for 30g of fibre per day! Try this [lentil shepherd's pie](#).



Switch your milk to M&S Plant Kitchen

Choose alternative milks from our Plant Kitchen range. This helps to ensure you're getting vitamins and minerals, such as vitamin B12, vitamin D, calcium, and iodine in your diet. Not all other types of milk alternatives are fortified, so make sure you check the label.



Go nuts

Topping soups and salads with a handful or just eating nuts and seeds as a snack adds more than just an extra crunch - it's an easy way to include plant-based protein in your diet, as well as other important vitamins and minerals. Try a [cashew chow mein](#) or this [walnut pasta sauce](#).



Small shifts can make a big difference

Changing our habits can be challenging but can make a big difference. If going full veggie isn't quite your thing, you can halve the meat in a cottage pie or lasagne and double the vegetables or pulses. Add black or pinto beans, green lentils or some sauteed mushrooms.



M&S, Development and Innovation Chef - Russell Goad says:

“ Cooking dishes with more vegetables, wholegrains, pulses, nuts and seeds has allowed me to eat a more varied diet by broadening my knowledge of the plant-based world, encouraging me to explore more flavours and textures, becoming more creative with my work.

It can be a more affordable way to cook, and I feel like I'm doing my bit for the planet. When I do choose to cook with meat and fish, I like to enjoy higher welfare, responsibly sourced free range/organic British produce, even if that means eating it less often. Quality over quantity!

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What else do you need to nurture your body?

Although protein is an important nutrient there are others to consider that may be less readily available in a plant-based diet, or when reducing meat and dairy.

By reducing and not eliminating meat and dairy, your diet may still include vitamins and minerals such as calcium, iodine, iron, vitamin B12 and zinc that are abundant in meat and dairy. But when moving to a completely plant-based diet more planning may be needed to ensure these important nutrients are included, and you may want to take a supplement.

If you have a specific dietary requirement you should talk directly to your GP or a nutritionist about this before making any change.

Nutrient	Function	Plant based sources
Calcium	Supports maintenance of normal bones and teeth.	Leafy vegetables like kale, calcium-fortified dairy-alternatives e.g. M&S Plant Kitchen Milks.
Iodine	Supports the maintenance of our skin.	M&S Plant Kitchen Milks are fortified with iodine.
Iron	Supports our immune system, cognitive development and transport of oxygen round the body.	Beans, pulses, nuts and seeds, quinoa, wholemeal bread, and dried fruit.
Vitamin B12	Supports our immune system and helps reduce tiredness and fatigue.	Fortified yeast extract and fortified breakfast cereals. M&S Plant Kitchen Milks are fortified with vitamin B12.
Zinc	Supports maintenance of bones, hair, nails and skin.	Nuts and seeds (e.g. pumpkin seeds and pine nuts), wholegrain breakfast cereals and wholegrain and seeded bread.