

# ARE MEATLESS Mondays For You?

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You probably know that a plant-based diet offers a lot of benefits for your health, but it can be hard to give up hamburgers and bacon. In fact, an estimated 4 out of 5 vegetarians eventually go back to eating meat.

**There's also evidence that making the transition gradually increases the chances of sticking with a meatless diet.**

Picking one day a week to eat vegetarian is an excellent place to start, and that's the thinking behind the global movement for Meatless Mondays.

The campaign has a longer history than you might think. During World War I, Meatless Mondays were advertised as a way to support the troops. In 2003, the idea was revived by public health experts to encourage positive changes in the way we eat.

**Begin each week with a meat-free day or design a schedule that works for your family.**

As you plan your new menus, take a look at these ideas.

## **Benefits of a Plant-Based Diet:**

- 1. Reduce your health risks.** Eating more fruits and vegetables can reduce your risk for diabetes, heart attacks, and strokes. Lifestyle choices, like your diet, play a major role in your wellbeing.
- 2. Lose weight.** Being a vegetarian won't make you thin if you're living on pizza

and potato chips. On the other hand, **vegetarians tend to weigh less, have lower body fat, and live longer than meat eaters.**

3. **Consume more fiber.** Increased fiber is one reason why most vegetarians slim down. Fiber also reduces blood pressure and inflammation.

4. **Spend less on food.** You may also wind up with more money in the bank. Lentils and tofu cost less than most meat products.

#### **Practicing Meatless Mondays at Home:**

1. **Learn new recipes.** Make vegetarian cooking fun by experimenting with new dishes. See how many different ways you can prepare chili or serve something elegant like a savory vegetable tart.

2. **Make substitutions.** Enjoy your old favorites without the meat. Use spinach in your lasagna and chickpeas for fajitas.

3. **Stock your kitchen. Simplify mealtime by shopping in advance for vegetarian staples.** Look for beans, nuts, and nutritional yeast.

4. **Do your research.** Visit your local library or bookstore to find books about vegetarian and vegan lifestyles.

5. **Reach out.** Learn from others who are trying to go meat-free. Browse through the Meatless Monday website or talk with friends and family who have made the transition.

#### **Practicing Meatless Mondays away from Home:**

1. **Visit ethnic restaurants.** You'll find many delicious vegetarian options at Indian and Middle Eastern restaurants. Keep a list handy for when it's your turn to choose where to go.
2. **Call ahead.** If you think the menu may be limited, contact a restaurant ahead of time. Even a steak house may be able to put together an entree you'll love.
3. **Order side dishes. Remember that you can create a balanced meal without ordering a main course.** Dine on hummus, roasted vegetables, and bread.
4. **Eat beforehand.** What if you know you're going to be stuck somewhere where the only meat-free items are the hamburger buns? Fill up before you leave home so you can have fun with your friends without being distracted by hunger pangs.
5. **Leave feedback. Expand meatless choices for yourself and other diners.** Let restaurants know about your experience and how much you'd appreciate seeing more meatless options on the menu.

Meatless Mondays could be the start of a whole new way of eating for you and your family. Maybe you'll decide to become vegetarian for life or just cut back on your consumption of processed meat.

Either way, moving towards a plant-based diet could enhance your health, slash your grocery bills, and reduce your carbon footprint.