

Plant-based diets

Health Engagement and Wellness Services

A whole-food, plant-based diet is based on minimally processed vegetables, tubers, whole grains, legumes, fruits, nuts, and seeds. It generally does not include animal-based foods, such as red meat, chicken, fish, dairy, and eggs. It also usually excludes highly processed foods such as white (or enriched) flours and most added sweeteners.

Research has shown health benefits of plant-based diets, whether the eating plan is completely free of animal-based foods, or contains limited amounts of them.

The phrase “plant-based diet” is used to refer to a number of eating plans that may include varying amounts of animal foods. Examples include:

Veganism: a diet of vegetables, legumes, tubers, fruit, grains, nuts, and seeds, but no food from animal sources.

Raw veganism: a vegan diet excluding food cooked to a temperature above 118 degrees.

Vegetarianism: a diet of vegetables, legumes, tubers, fruit, grains, nuts, and seeds that may include eggs and dairy, but no meat.

Ovo-lacto vegetarianism: a vegetarian diet that includes dairy and eggs.

Ovo vegetarianism: a vegetarian diet that includes eggs but no dairy.

Lacto vegetarianism: a vegetarian diet that includes dairy but no eggs.

Semi-vegetarianism or, flexitarianism: a vegetarian diet that may occasionally include red meat, fish, or poultry.

Macrobiotics: a semi-vegetarian diet that highlights whole grains, vegetables, beans, sea vegetables, and cultured and fermented foods. It also includes fish and seafood but no red meat, eggs, or dairy.