

Wellness by the Month

Vegetarian Awareness Month

World Vegetarian Day is celebrated on October first, the annual kick-off of Vegetarian Awareness Month. This month is dedicated to educating the public about the health and ecological benefits of eating more vegetarian meals.

Why Eat Vegetarian?

To eat vegetarian is to exclude meat, poultry and fish from your diet. Some vegetarians will not consume eggs, dairy products, or honey. Vegetarians follow this diet for religious, cultural, political, environmental, or health reasons.

Health experts agree that there is a positive relationship between vegetarian lifestyles and decreased risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, obesity and certain cancers.

Plant foods contain antioxidants, fiber and they are low in saturated fat. They also contain vitamins, minerals, complex carbohydrates and proteins. These are great reasons to include more vegetables, fruits and grains into your diet.

In fact, the Center of Disease Control (CDC) has launched a national campaign “Fruits and Veggies – More Matters”. The CDC has determined that eating more vegetarian meals is a good start. Adults need between seven and 13 cups of produce daily. Although that sounds like a lot, there are a variety of ways to add them to your day without much effort.

Try going vegetarian for a day and boost your intake of these great foods!

- ✓ Have soup and salad for a meal
- ✓ Add veggies like green pepper, mushrooms or tomato instead of pepperoni to your pizza
- ✓ Use meatless spaghetti sauce and add chopped veggies for extra flavor
- ✓ Substitute onions, green pepper, or mushrooms for meat in your omelet
- ✓ Keep freshly cut veggies in the refrigerator for snack attacks
- ✓ Add beans or fruit to your salad
- ✓ Add fresh fruit to your cereal, yogurt or pancakes
- ✓ And don't be afraid to try a new vegetable or fruit every week or month
- ✓ Tofu is a great meat substitute

Make sure you wash all vegetables and fruits thoroughly under cold running water and rub or scrub them well to remove dirt and chemicals.

For a list of seasonal fruits and veggies go to www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov and for great vegetarian recipes, go to www.vrq.org.