



Managing Diabetes on a Vegetarian Diet

A vegetarian diet can be helpful in the management of diabetes, and has the potential to offer additional benefits as well. The advantages depend on the type of diet followed, as well as individual food choices. They can include:

- **Better weight management** – This is possibly due to the low calorie, high fiber nature of plant-based foods. A vegetarian diet also eliminates most fast food, and many animal products high in saturated fat.
- **Improved blood sugar control** – Vegetarian diets are usually high in fiber, especially from fruits and vegetables, beans, and whole grains. A high fiber diet can help with both satiety and blood sugar control.
- **Reduced heart disease risk** – Vegetarian diets are typically higher in soluble fiber, soy protein, plant sterols, nuts, and unsaturated fats, all of which may help lower blood lipids like cholesterol. Higher intakes of nutrients found in fruits and vegetables, along with reduced sodium may also reduce blood pressure.
- **Lower cost** – taking the meat out of your diet can drastically reduce grocery store costs.

Balance is Key

To achieve the benefits listed above, attention must still be paid to the quality of one's food choices. Potato chips and mac and cheese might be vegetarian, but they certainly aren't the basis for a healthful diet!

The Diabetes Plate Method is a good guideline to follow for vegetarians with diabetes. Replace the meat section with a source of vegetarian protein such as tofu, beans, or nuts. For vegetarian meal ideas and more information about the Diabetes Plate Method, visit the American Diabetes Association website at <http://www.diabetes.org>.

