

For people looking to add more plant-based foods to their diets without going full vegetarian or vegan, the Flexitarian Diet may serve as the ideal plan.



WHAT IS THE FLEXITARIAN DIET?

The Flexitarian (a combination of “flexible” and “vegetarian”) Diet serves to strike a healthy balance, allowing people to reap the benefits of vegetarian eating while still enjoying animal products in moderation.

There are no hard and fast rules characteristic of most diets. It's considered to be more of a healthy lifestyle than a diet. Eating flexitarian may support weight loss and reduce your risk of heart disease, cancer and type 2 diabetes. It may even be good for the planet. Overall, the goal is to eat more nutritious plant-based foods and less meat.

General Flexitarian Guidelines:

- Eat mostly vegetables, fruits, legumes and whole grains.
- Opt for protein from plant sources instead of animals.
- Incorporate flexibility by eating meat and animal products from time to time.
- Choose the most natural, whole form of food. The less processed the better.
- Significantly limit added sugar and sweets.

Popular Flexitarian Plant-Based Food Choices:

- **Proteins:** Soybeans, tofu, tempeh, legumes, lentils.
- **Non-starchy vegetables:** Greens, bell peppers, Brussels sprouts, green beans, carrots, cauliflower.
- **Starchy vegetables:** Winter squash, peas, corn, sweet potato.
- **Fruits:** Apples, oranges, berries, grapes, cherries.
- **Whole grains:** Quinoa, teff, buckwheat, farro.
- **Nuts, seeds and other healthy fats:** Almonds, flaxseeds, chia seeds, walnuts, cashews, pistachios, peanut butter, avocados, olives, coconut.
- **Plant-based milk alternatives:** Unsweetened almond, coconut, hemp and soy milk.
- **Herbs, spices and seasonings:** Basil, oregano, mint, thyme, cumin, turmeric, ginger.
- **Condiments:** Reduced-sodium soy sauce, apple cider vinegar, salsa, mustard, nutritional yeast, ketchup without added sugar.
- **Beverages:** Still and sparkling water, tea, coffee.

Popular Animal-Based Food Choices:

- **Eggs:** Free-range or pasture-raised.
- **Poultry:** Organic, free-range or pasture-raised.
- **Fish:** Wild-caught.
- **Meat:** Grass-fed or pasture-raised.
- **Dairy:** Organic from grass-fed or pastured animals.

Foods to Minimize on the Flexitarian Diet

The Flexitarian Diet not only encourages limiting meat and animal products but also limiting highly processed foods, refined grains and added sugar.

- **Processed meats:** Bacon, sausage, bologna.
- **Refined carbs:** White bread, white rice, bagels, croissants.
- **Added sugar and sweets:** Soda, donuts, cakes, cookies, candy.
- **Fast food:** Fries, burgers, chicken nuggets, milkshakes.