



# the HEALTHY DOSE

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## Vitamins & Minerals and Plant-based Diets



Vegetarian and vegan diets continue to gain popularity and although these plant-based diets can provide health benefits such as reducing the risk of heart disease, diabetes and some cancers, proper planning is needed to ensure adequate intake of essential nutrients. As with any diet, choices should include whole fruits and vegetables, legumes and nuts, and whole grains. Foods high in calories, sugar, fat and sodium should be limited. The natural sources of vitamins like B12 and minerals such as calcium, may not be included in diets that are more restrictive. This makes it more challenging to get all the nutrients you need.

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### So which nutrients should you pay attention to?

**Calcium and Vitamin D** are vital to the maintenance of your teeth and bones. Since dairy products are the most abundant source of calcium, if dairy is not included in your diet you need to include other sources of calcium. Adults need from 1000 to 1200mg of calcium per day. Dark green vegetables such as turnip and broccoli are good sources of calcium if eaten in sufficient amounts. Half a cup of cooked broccoli provides 33mg of calcium. Some juices and soy products are also supplemented

with calcium. One cup of fortified orange juice, soy or almond beverage can provide 300mg of calcium. Still not getting enough? Ask your pharmacist about taking calcium supplements.

**Vitamin D** is also important to bone health. Some foods, such as cow's milk are enriched with vitamin D and it is absorbed from sunlight through your skin. However, in southern Ontario there is not enough sun exposure to ensure adequate vitamin D and if you are also not drinking milk you will definitely need to supplement. Most health care professionals recommend 1000 to 2000 units of vitamin D3 per day.

**Vitamin B12** is essential for the production of red blood cells. Vitamin enriched cereals and soy products may contain some Vitamin B12 but the most natural source is from animal products. Anyone following a vegetarian or vegan diet should consider supplementing with Vitamin B12.

**Protein** is something we often think of coming from animal sources such as dairy products and eggs, but it can be easy to get sufficient protein from plant-based sources if you eat a variety of them every day. Soy products, legumes, lentils, nuts, seeds and whole grains can all be good sources of protein. Remember that protein helps maintain healthy skin, bones, muscles and organs.

**Iron and zinc** are two nutrients that are not as easily absorbed from plant sources as they are from animal sources. Vegetarians need to increase their recommended intake of iron from sources such as dried beans and peas, lentils, enriched cereals, whole grain products and dark leafy green vegetables. Eating foods rich in vitamin C at the same time will help your body absorb iron. Plant sources of zinc include soy products, whole grains, legumes and nuts.

**More questions about what you might be missing in your daily diet?  
Visit one of our Morelli's Pharmacy locations in March  
for our Vitamin and Mineral Clinic!**

North Oakville	March 16 <sup>th</sup>	12 pm - 4 pm
Fairview	March 7 <sup>th</sup>	12 pm - 4 pm
Markham	March 17 <sup>th</sup>	12 pm - 4 pm
Brampton	March 21 <sup>st</sup>	12 pm - 4 pm
Walker's	March 16 <sup>th</sup>	12 pm - 4 pm
Burloak	March 18 <sup>th</sup>	12 pm - 3 pm
Boxgrove	March 31 <sup>st</sup>	12 pm - 4 pm
Aurora	March 23 <sup>rd</sup>	12 pm - 4 pm
Maple Leaf Square	March 26 <sup>th</sup>	10 am - 2 pm
Leaside	March 16 <sup>th</sup>	12 pm - 4 pm
South Oakville	March 30 <sup>th</sup>	12 pm - 4 pm