

**The Vegan Society : 7 Battle Road, St. Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex,
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SOCIETY

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*The Vegan Society Ltd
promotes a way of life
entirely free of
animal products
for the benefit of
humans, animals
and the environment*

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for your enquiry about veganism and the work of the Vegan Society.

Founded in November 1944, the Society (which now has the status of educational charity) promotes ways of living which seek, as far as possible and practical, to dispense with *all* animal products, whether used for food, clothing or other purposes.

The vegan ethic endeavours to expand our sphere of compassion to all other species and to bring about an end to institutionalized animal abuse characterized most obviously by the meat, milk, egg/poultry industries, the fur trade and the vivisection laboratory.

The Society currently receives over 20,000 enquiries a year. Whilst we welcome the dramatically increasing interest in our work, this volume of enquiries places a heavy strain on our small staff and on the meagre financial resources of a charity which as yet does not receive the massive legacy income enjoyed by many other pro-animal and environmental organizations.

For those who wish to support the Vegan Society in its campaign to promote the ethic and the benefits of veganism **the simplest initial step to take is to join**, either as a Member (a practising vegan) or an Associate (non-vegan). Membership/Associateship includes a subscription to the Society's magazine - *The Vegan*. Please complete the enclosed **Membership Application** form.

Donations, large or small, are of course equally welcome - not least to allow us to continue issuing the *Information Pack* without charge. As a guide to our expenditure on this item alone, the cost of each *Pack*, inclusive of postage, is over 35p.

We look forward to hearing from you again with an order, an enquiry, or your membership/associateship application.

Best wishes

The Vegan Society

CASE IN POINT



EATING WITHOUT CRUELTY

by Dr Gill Langley



1. Are you a vegetarian who has thought about becoming a vegan, but shelved the idea for a while because you haven't the time to look into it properly, or you're concerned that you might miss out on some essential vitamins or minerals? If so, think again. Becoming a vegan takes a little thought to start with, but it's mainly a matter of adjusting to a few different foods and modifying some of your meals. Taking the step from vegetarianism to veganism is easier than making that first change from meat-eating to the vegetarian way of life.

2. A vegan's diet is free of any products derived from animals — including meat, fish, poultry, eggs, milk, honey, and their derivatives. But being a vegan doesn't only mean avoiding foods: it's an exciting venture into a world of tasty ingredients, with the added knowledge that no cow or chicken has had to suffer to produce the meal on your dinner plate. Veganism borrows from the best of many cuisines, and today it's easy to buy vegan food, from soya yoghurts to veggieburgers, and from tofu mayonnaise to soya ice cream.

3. The Vegan Society* recommends a varied approach with regular use of foods from the following groups: pulses, whole grains and seeds; fresh vegetables, including green leafy ones; and fresh and dried fruits. With such wholesome and simple ingredients, a delicious variety of meals can be made, as can be seen by glancing through any vegan cookbook.

4. What about those deficiencies which the media (and some people's doctors) threaten vegans with? There isn't a single essential nutrient which a balanced and varied vegan diet cannot provide, and doctors who warn of painful monthly injections or instant anaemia are talking through their hats! However, being a vegan does require understanding a lit-

tle about vegan sources of those essential nutrients. It's no good giving up meat, milk and eggs, and surviving on tea and bread or chips and Coke. There are healthy and unhealthy vegan diets, just as there are good and bad meat-based or vegetarian diets.

5. Here are some basic rules to follow when becoming a vegan. Protein is not a problem. The World Health Organisation and the British Department of Health recommend that about one-tenth of our daily calories should be in the form of protein. But there's no need to get out the scales and calorie charts! Make sure that, in general, at each meal you have something from the main protein groups — beans, peas, lentils, tofu or textured vegetable protein foods; whole grains (such as wheat, barley, muesli, maize, rice and products made from them such as bread, crispbreads and pasta); and nuts (such as toasted cashews or almonds sprinkled on your main meal, or a nut roast). More than 10 studies of vegans have shown that their protein intake meets the official requirements.

6. Until recently, vegans were advised to combine two 'complementary' protein foods at each meal, to be sure of getting the combination of amino acids which the body needs. However, research has shown that this isn't necessary after all, and the American Dietetic Association explained in its 1988 report on vegetarianism that eating a variety of protein foods on a daily basis is perfectly adequate.

7. A wholefood vegan diet contains lots of vitamins, especially A, the B complex, C, E and K. Like meat-eaters and vegetarians, vegans obtain most of their vitamin D by the action of sunlight on the skin. Some people think that vitamin B₁₂ presents a problem, but it is easily available in foods which contain small amounts naturally, as well as fortified products. These include edible seaweeds and nutritional yeast, as well as fortified yeast extracts, textured vegetable meat substitutes, and some soya milks and vegan margarines. Vitamin B₁₂ deficiency is rare in vegans, but in cases of particular concern suitable supplements are available from health food shops. A deficiency of B₁₂ causes serious problems, so although there's no need to worry about it, it is important to ensure a regular intake.

8. Despite scare stories in the media, vegan diets contain more than twice the recommended amount of iron and anaemia is uncommon. Although plant iron is less well-absorbed than iron from meat, and the fibre and phytate in plant foods may interfere slightly with absorption, the amounts of vitamin C eaten by most vegans help overcome any possible problem.

9. Adult vegans tend to eat just about the recommended amount of calcium, although some vegan children may not be eating as much as officially suggested. However, signs of calcium deficiency are very rare in vegans. This seems to be because there are other factors in a plant-based diet which allows vegans to make the best use of the calcium in their food. For example, a diet high in protein, especially meat, causes the body to lose calcium. As vegans

eat no meat and their protein intake is moderate, their bodies retain more calcium. Similarly, some research suggests that boron, a mineral found especially in fruits and vegetables, encourages the body to make use of calcium in the diet. Foods rich in calcium include tofu, almonds, brazils, soya flour, spinach, molasses, sesame and sunflower seeds (and especially spreads made from them), and parsley.

10. Research involving human 'guinea pigs' is gradually revealing the health benefits of veganism. Low in fat, especially saturated fat, and cholesterol-free; high in fibre and complex carbohydrates; low in salt; and rich in vitamins A and C, vegan diets have much to offer the health-conscious. Vegans are less at risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer of the breast and colon (two of the most common cancers), gallstones, diverticular disease, haemorrhoids, diabetes and kidney stones. Some doctors have prescribed vegan diets for treating high blood pressure, angina, rheumatoid arthritis and asthma, and several patients have been able to give up drugs which they were taking for those conditions. Most GPs, however, continue to be ignorant about veganism.

11. Apart from the rather technical facts and figures, for those concerned about animal and human rights there are basic and obvious advantages to becoming a vegan. No longer will you be dependent on the chain-of-farm animal suffering which includes the live export of calves separated from their mothers, and the slaughter of worn-out dairy cows for meat. No more worries about whether eggs are really free-range, and the untimely deaths in their millions of male chicks who are useless for egg laying. Vegan food production is environmentally sound, and doesn't involve the import of protein-rich food from Third World countries to be used as animal feed.

12. Although many of us adopt veganism primarily for these reasons, rather than for possible health benefits, there are spin-offs for laboratory animals too. If we are able to reduce our risk of disease — whether kidney stones, heart disease or cancer — then we are also reducing the likelihood that we might have to take drugs which have been developed and tested on laboratory animals. And finally, in lighter vein, vegan food is absolutely delicious. Most of the vegans I know really enjoy eating, and with more than 18 vegan cookbooks available, there's no shortage of tasty ideas!