

By way of disclaimer, most of us in PBEC are not health care professionals or registered dietitians, and nutrition science is frequently being updated with new information. Many of us have a genuine interest in nutrition and are known to study the subject, share information with each other, and have ongoing discussions on how to eat healthy, delicious food. If you have specific questions about diet as it relates to any medical conditions you may have, it is always the best practice to discuss this with your healthcare team and also to do your own research.

For those of us in the UU Plant-Based Eating Club (PBEC) who have been eating either a mostly or completely plant-based diet for a while, we are used to being asked questions about nutrition. In this document, I will try to give some high-level information and access to some trusted resources to answer this question and also point to some helpful nutrition information related to plant-based diets.

The [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](#) (formerly known as the American Dietetic Association) confirms that vegan diets are appropriate for all life stages:

*“According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, ‘appropriately planned vegetarian, including vegan, diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate and may provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases.’ ... A well-planned vegetarian or vegan diet can meet the nutrient needs of people from all stages of life, including those going through pregnancy and lactation, childhood and participating in competitive sports. It's just about making sure you get the nutrients you need.”*

A key concept in the above quote is “appropriately planned” and “well-planned.” It is very possible to eat a diet composed entirely of plant-based foods that is not particularly healthy. Highly processed foods like Oreos, Ritz crackers, potato chips, and Skittles are all vegan, for example. Our group encourages members to eat more whole foods that don't include much if any added sugars, salt, oil, or refined grains like white flour for their health. We also encourage each other to eat a wide variety of foods, including greens, beans, whole grains, nuts, seeds, fruits, vegetables, and fungi (mushrooms) to give our bodies a variety of nutrients. This approach will ensure most people meet their recommended dietary allowance for protein and other essential nutrients.

Physicians and nutritionists are increasingly recognizing the health benefits of whole foods, plant-based eating. The [Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine](#), a non-profit organization, states:

*“A plant-based diet consists of exclusively plant foods, including fruit, vegetables, grains, and legumes, and avoids meat, dairy, and eggs. Plant-based foods are full of fiber, rich in vitamins and minerals, free of cholesterol, and low in calories and saturated fat. Eating a variety of these foods provides all the protein, calcium, and other essential nutrients your body needs. It's important to include a reliable source of vitamin B12 in your diet. You can easily meet your vitamin B12 needs with a daily supplement or fortified foods, such as vitamin B12-fortified breakfast cereals, plant milks, and nutritional yeast.*

*Those who eat a **plant-based** diet lower their risk for heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and other health conditions....”*

# Nutritional Considerations for a Plant-Based Diet

By John Dundon

The most common question that we get is how to get enough protein on a plant-based diet. Click [UUPBEC – Information about Protein](#) for more information on the topic.

As noted above, one nutrient that most if not all healthcare professionals who make nutritional recommendations agree on is the need for B-12 supplements for those people who choose to eat a fully plant-based diet with no animal products. It is possible to get enough B-12 from fortified foods, such as soy milk and nutritional yeast, but taking an inexpensive supplement once a day is an easy way to get enough of this vital nutrient.

I hope this article has been helpful, and welcome your feedback or additional questions. To reiterate, we at PBEC are not physicians or nutritionists, but rather a group of laypeople who are interested in learning more about how plant-based eating can improve our health and the health of our planet. Over the past few years, PBEC has hosted a number of movie nights, book discussions, and diet support groups where we have discussed and supported each other on our journeys to improve our health by eating nutritious, plant-based foods. We look forward to doing more of this, and also continuing the ongoing discussions on our email list. To submit a question or comment, or to join our email list, send an email to [UU-Plant-Based-contact-us@googlegroups.com](mailto:UU-Plant-Based-contact-us@googlegroups.com).

John Dundon has a certificate in Plant-Based Nutrition from the T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutritional Studies at eCornell University, and has eaten an entirely plant-based diet for almost 7 years.
---