

Vegans may lack essential nutrient intake, study reports

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The health benefits of a plant-based diet is well-known, but the question remains: Could vegans be at risk for deficiency of essential nutrients? A retrospective review by Mayo Clinic physicians recently published in the *Journal of the American Osteopathic Association* indicated that vegans should ensure adequate intake of a few nutrients.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

According to a 2012 Gallup poll, two percent of the U.S. population follows a vegan diet, which is a strict plant-based diet that excludes all animal-derived foods. Increasingly, people are choosing to follow this diet for ethical, environmental, religious and [health concerns](#). With the growing popularity of plant-based diets, the Mayo Clinic team compiled a review of recent literature to monitor and advise vegans to ensure proper nutritional intake. Nutrients of concern are vitamin B-12, iron, calcium, vitamin D, protein and [omega-3 fatty acids](#).

"We found that some of these nutrients, which can have implications in neurologic disorders, anemia, bone strength and other health concerns, can be deficient in poorly planned vegan diets," says Heather Fields, M.D., Community and Internal Medicine at Mayo Clinic in Arizona. Contrary to popular belief, "Vegans have not been shown to be deficient in protein intake or in any specific amino acids."

The study points out that some [vegans](#) rely heavily on processed foods and may not eat a sufficient variety of fruits, vegetables and whole grains. A whole food, plant-based diet is commendable, and a well-planned vegan [diet](#) can be adequate to achieve proper nutrition, but requires some education.

The Mayo Clinic review team recommends that health care providers monitor vegan patients for adequate blood levels of vitamin B-12, iron, ferritin, calcium and vitamin D.

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