Eating Less Meat

Here are some suggestions to ease your way into a meat free diet.

**1. Have Good Reasons**

You’ll need a bit of motivation to change to a meat free lifestyle, so first think about why you want to become a vegetarian and really believe in it. Once you’re motivated, the rest is easy.

**2. At first, don’t try to “never eat meat again”**

You don’t have to give up meat all in one go. You can give up gradually. Start by stopping eating red meat first and try that for a week or two. Then move on to giving up pork. Then transition to chicken and turkey. Many of your favourite meat recipes come in vegetarian versions allowing you to gradually transition away from meat. When you’re ready, gradually cut out chicken and turkey and eat just fish. Eventually you can stop eating fish and go fully vegetarian.

**3. Plan for each phase**

Set yourself a goal at each stage. If you’re giving up red meat this week, make sure there is no red meat in the house, and replace it with chicken/fish or a vegetarian alternative. Plan your meals for the week, and gradually start to substitute meat with vegetarian alternatives. There is no rush! You don’t have to change everything at once. Start with substituting one meat meal a week with a vegetarian option, and work your way up.

**4. Make vegetarian versions of your favourite meals**

Simply replace the meat in your favourite meals with a vegetarian alternative. You can substitute vegetarian sausages for meat ones; vegetarian pizza for meat pizza; baked potatoes with beans and cheese instead of chili or bacon; and use quorn as a substitute for chicken in stir fries – the possibilities are endless.

**5. Think about your staples**

A useful exercise is to make a list of foods you regularly eat, for breakfast, lunch, dinner, desserts and snacks. Not meals, but ingredients. And then think about vegetarian alternatives, and make a new list. For example, instead of eating chicken in a stir-fry dish, you might try tofu. With a new list of staples, you should have no trouble stocking your pantry. As you may be removing a protein source from your diet, make sure you don’t just replace it with starchy carbohydrates. Keep your diet balanced and healthy.

**6. Explore the amazing variety of Ethnic foods**

One of the great things about becoming a vegetarian is that it often spurs people to try new and interesting ethnic foods. Great vegetarian dishes can be found all over the world, from countries as far afield as China, Ethiopia, Morocco, Mexico, Brazil and more. You can do a series of country themed weeks, trying vegetarian dishes from a certain country each week.

**7. Have fun.**

Most of all, don’t make becoming a vegetarian be a restrictive, gruelling ordeal. If you feel like you’re depriving yourself, you won’t last long. But if you feel like you’re doing something good, and trying out some great-tasting food, you’ll stick with it for much longer (for life, I hope). Have a great time along the way.