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1345 Kuser Rd, Suite 5 - Hamilton, NJ 08619 - phone: (609) 585-8400 - visit us on the web at: [www.cassaraconsulting.com](http://www.cassaraconsulting.com) - email: [info@cassaraconsulting.com](mailto:info@cassaraconsulting.com)

## Going Meatless Once a Week



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Going vegetarian for one day a week for dietary or religious reasons is a small change in your diet that can improve your health and the environment. Going light on meat was the norm a few generations ago when meat often was consumed in side dish portions, while nutrient-rich beans and lentils, vegetables and whole grains took center stage.

### Don't Just Cut Back, Add to Your Diet

Eating no meat one day a week is not only about subtracting from your diet, but adding to it. Eating more whole grains, beans and lentils and vegetables on your meatless day offers many health benefits.

Whole-grain, unprocessed carbohydrates — such as whole-wheat bread, whole-grain pasta, brown rice, oats, buckwheat, quinoa and millet — can help prevent heart disease, certain cancers and diabetes. Experimenting with a new grain choice on your next meatless day can provide fiber for normal bowel function, along with a variety of vitamins and minerals that contribute to the nutrient density of your diet.

Americans regularly eat more than enough protein, and adding beans or lentils to your meat-free meal also maintains an adequate protein intake. Providing about 16 grams of protein per cup cooked, beans and lentils also are a great source of fiber, folate, iron and potassium. These nutrient-rich foods are good sources of manganese, magnesium, copper, and thiamin.

Vegetables are nutrient powerhouses and add color and texture to your meals. Try leafy greens such as kale, collards, bok choy and broccoli for good plant sources of calcium.

### Good for the Environment

Consuming a plant-based diet can benefit the environment. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization, livestock was estimated to contribute to 14.5 percent of global human-caused greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). In the U.S., the Environmental Protection Agency estimates that livestock contributes to more than one-third of methane emissions, one type of GHG. Eating less meat by going meatless one day a week can contribute to efforts to reduce GHG.

Reviewed March 2018 by Monique Ryan, MS, RD, CSSD, LDN. Published March 19, 2018. To learn more healthy tips, visit [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) and consult a registered dietitian nutritionist. Info obtained from [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).