

VEG POWER FAQs

Why isn't the potato a vegetable?

White potatoes do not count towards your 5-a-day, however sweet potatoes do. Potatoes are still a vegetable, but don't count towards your 5-a-day as they mainly contribute starch (a kind of carbohydrate) and a significant source of energy to your diet. Other root vegetables, such as sweet potatoes, are usually eaten as a vegetable alongside the main starchy carbohydrate food in a meal, hence these do count towards your daily veg portions.



What is the definition of a vegetable? (and vs. pulse/legume)

A vegetable is a plant or part of a plant used as food. This can include a plant's leaves, roots, tubers, flowers, stems, seeds and shoots. Tubers are the underground (i.e. under the soil) sections of plants used for their energy storage. For example, a white potato is a tuber. Legumes are the seeds of the plant in a pod. When eaten in their immature (young) form, they're simply called legumes, and an example is garden peas. Mature legumes are so-called 'pulses', and include beans, lentils and chickpeas.



Why is veg good for you?

Vegetables tend to be low in fats, sugars and energy, and some, such as peas, can be high in fibre and/or protein. They also contain a large variety of vitamins and minerals, with different vegetables containing their own assortment of these. This is why it's recommended that we eat a variety of

different vegetables, more variety means we consume a wider selection of different vitamins and minerals. All of these nutrients have vital roles in keeping our bodies healthy.

What is a mineral?

Minerals are nutrients we need in very small amounts, which have lots of important roles in the body. They're especially important for managing reactions in the body and as building blocks (calcium in bones). Key minerals include calcium (bones) and iron (blood oxygen).

What is a vitamin?

Vitamins are nutrients we need in very small amounts, which have lots of important roles in the body. They're especially important for managing reactions in the body. Key vitamins include vitamin C (immunity), vitamin D (bones) and B vitamins (energy).



What is fibre?

Fibre is a kind of carbohydrate which cannot be digested. We need to all eat more fibre, and fibre is very important in the diet, so make sure to eat fruits, vegetables, wholegrains, beans and peas, and nuts and seeds to get enough.

Can you eat too many vegetables?

Yes and no. Although the recommendation is 5-a-day for veg and fruits, it's even better to aim for more daily portions. 6, 7 or 8 portions - the more veg (and especially the wider variety of vegetables) the better. However, eating a lot of plant matter, and so introducing a lot of fibre into our bodies, can uncommonly cause a slightly upset stomach for some people. It's best to listen to your body - you'll know if you've eaten too many veg!



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Why are vegetables different colours?

Vegetables contain a wide variety of natural pigments (colours) called 'phytonutrients'. This is a large family of different pigments, and different pigments impart different colours. Vegetables broadly fall into 5 different colour groups: red, purple/blue, orange/yellow, green and white/brown. Lycopene and carotenoids can impart red/orange/yellow colours, anthocyanins impart blue/purple colours, and chlorophyll can impart green.



Why are there no blue vegetables?

Although they're not very common on our UK supermarket shelves, there are naturally blue vegetables! Blue corn (a blue sweetcorn on the cob), purple potatoes (blue despite their name) and blue carrots (originally, carrots were indigo before the orange variety were bred) are all naturally vivid blue. More common in the UK are the purple/blue vegetables aubergine and purple cabbage.

Can I live off vegetables?

Technically, yes. By eating a very wide variety and large quantity of vegetables (including pulses), planning your diet well, and supplementing your diet with an omega 3 supplement, you could get the nutrients you need from a vegetable-based diet. However, a healthy balanced

diet should contain a wide variety of foods and food groups, as we can more easily meet our nutritional needs solely through food this way. Vegetables, fruits, starchy carbohydrates, protein-rich foods such as beans, fish and meat, dairy and alternatives, and healthy oils should all feature in a healthy diet.

Do microwaves destroy the nutrients in veg?

Simply, no! Microwaving has been shown to be one of the best cooking methods to retain nutrients in food whilst cooking - better nutrient retention than is seen with boiling vegetables. (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1745-4557.1994.tb00135.x>)

What's the best way to cook veg?

Steaming and microwaving have been shown to be the best methods to cook veg to retain nutrients, as well as colour and texture. Microwave steaming is an excellent and simple way to cook veg to eat it at its best. (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1745-4557.1994.tb00135.x>)

Why do vegetables look different to each other?

The plant kingdom is extremely diverse. Vegetables come from different families and groups, and each individual vegetable has its own DNA—its own personal code which dictates how a vegetable will look. Therefore, vegetables look different to each other as they have different DNA coding for different colours, shapes and sizes. How a vegetable looks can also be determined by soil growing conditions, the quality of harvest, and age at harvesting - it's a very complex business!

