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Overview of Vegetarian/Vegan Diets

UNIT 1





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Deaf Chefs
Learning the Vegan Cuisine
2024-1-DE02-KA220-VET-000254897



UNIT 1:

Overview of Vegetarian/Vegan Diets

The term "vegetarian" was derived from the Latin word "vegetus" which means alive, health and full of life by Elsie Shrigley and Donald Watson. The word "vegan" was coined in the 20th century by Donald Watson, one of the founders of the vegan society, by taking the first and last letters of "vegetarian" to distinguish vegans from vegetarians (Turkish Vegan Association, 2021). Veganism, in its simplest definition, means avoiding the consumption of animal-based foods.

Veganism is perceived as a philosophy and lifestyle that seeks to avoid all forms of exploitation and cruelty toward animals—whether for food, clothing or other purposes—as much as is practically possible. It supports the development and use of alternatives that do not involve animals for the benefit of humans, animals and the environment. In terms of diet, it refers to the rejection of products obtained entirely or partially from animals (The Vegan Society, 1979). In this context, vegetarianism and veganism have evolved into a way of life influenced by factors such as climate and environment, animal rights, health and nutrition and sustainability (Aymankuy & Topal, 2022).

Vegetarianism, which dates back to the 6th century BCE, is a dietary pattern primarily based on the consumption of plant-based foods. According to American Dietetic Association (ADA) vegetarian individual is someone who avoids or limits the consumption of animal-based foods such as meat, poultry, fish, dairy products and eggs (ADA, 2003). While it is not possible to determine the exact global prevalence of vegetarianism, its adoption varies significantly across regions. Asia has the highest prevalence rate, at 19%, while India leads with nearly 40% of its population identifying as vegetarian. The prevalence of vegetarianism in Africa, the Middle East and Latin America ranges





between 8% and 16%, while North America and Europe have the lowest rates, at approximately 5-6% (Hargreaves et al., 2021).

Vegetarianism is further divided into specific dietary types based on the extent of animal product consumption. These categories include:

- Vegan (completely excludes all animal products)
- Fruitarian (fruit-based diet)
- Zen Macrobiotic
- Raw Foodists
- Lacto-vegetarian (includes dairy but excludes eggs, meat, poultry and fish)
- Ovo-vegetarian (includes eggs but excludes dairy, meat, poultry and fish)
- Lacto-ovo vegetarian (includes both dairy and eggs but excludes meat, poultry and fish)
- Semi-vegetarian (occasionally consumes meat, poultry or fish)
- Pesco-vegetarian (includes fish but excludes meat and poultry)
- Polo-vegetarian (includes poultry but excludes meat and fish) (Karabudak, 2012).

Vegetarianism is generally adopted for economic, religious, animal rights, ethical, dietary preference and ecological sustainability reasons. Another primary motivation is health (Dagnelie & Mariotti, 2017; Karabudak, 2008). A study by Jabs, Devine and Sobal (1998) identified two main types of vegetarians based on their motivations:

- Health vegetarians, who adopt the diet due to the perceived link between animal products and diseases.
- Ethical vegetarians, who are driven by their belief in animal rights (Jabs et al., 1998).





Several studies suggest that a vegetarian diet may help prevent obesity, cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, hypertension and cancer (ADA, 2003; Özcan & Baysal, 2016). However, it is unclear whether these benefits stem from avoiding meat or adopting a more balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fiber (ADA, 2003).

Vegetarian diets have been found to cause individual variations in body weight, but current evidence is insufficient to draw definitive conclusions (Jaacks et al., 2016). The possible mechanisms behind these effects include:

- High consumption of fruits, vegetables and fiber-rich foods leading to greater stomach fullness, slower gastric emptying and reduced nutrient absorption, which in turn prevents overeating (Huang et al., 2016).

Lower intake of fats and saturated fats, which results in reduced overall calorie consumption (Appleby et al., 1998).

