



Vegetarian Diets in Long Term Care Settings

Long term care settings are continually changing with new demands and challenges appearing daily. As a younger population enters the long term care arena, one of the challenges some facilities are meeting is the request for vegetarian diets. Many facilities can easily meet the challenge for a lacto ovo vegetarian diet, although creativity is a must to avoid repetitive food items. Stricter

vegetarian regimens are more challenging and more costly.

Vegetarian Diet Variations

Semi vegetarian and lacto-ovo vegetarian diets are easier to accommodate than strict vegetarian regimens. Lacto vegetarian, ovo-vegetarian and vegan diets can be managed in long term care, but it may be difficult to provide all essential nutrients without the use of additional supplementation. The vegan diet in particular is often deficient in iron, zinc, vitamin D, B12 and linolenic acid. In addition, most long term care residents are at risk of malnutrition due to chronic disease states and other health conditions. Strict vegetarian diets may place these individuals at even greater risk of malnutrition (unless managed very closely).

Food	Semi Vegetarian		Lacto-Ovo		Lacto-Vegetarian		Ovo-Vegetarian		Vegan	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Meat	Occasional			√		√		√		√
Poultry	Occasional			√		√		√		√
Fish/Seafood	Occasional			√		√		√		√
Eggs	√		√			√	√			√
Dairy Products	√		√		√			√		√

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Creative Menu Alterations

To avoid repetition, it is important to have some creative ways to modify the regular diet without having to spend an extensive amount of time making special individual alternate foods. Susan Boardsen, MPH, RD, LD, a consultant from Iowa uses vegetarian burgers, chicken substitutes, and vegetarian soup base to make gravies.

Vegan diets offer a different challenge. Perri Kushan RD,LD, Executive Dietitian, Menorah Park Center for Senior Living, Beachwood, Ohio says, "We have a younger, more health conscious sub acute unit looking for healthier foods. We are now offering

one vegan item each lunch and dinner. We are trying to ensure 3-4 ounces of protein in each item, but sometimes it is hard.” Perri’s greatest challenges in meeting dietary requirements for vegetarian diets are getting enough protein in each vegetarian dish, resident acceptance and offering adequate variety. Perri has found that residents like items that are similar to regular foods such as veggie burgers, vegan sloppy Joes, vegan stroganoff, and they are less interested in some of the more creative items, such as bean stew or rice stuffed green peppers.

As the mother of three children who are Vegan and one who is on a Macrobiotic diet, Madalyn Friedberg, RD CDN of Rosary Hill Home, Hawthorne, New York has a great deal of personal experience to draw from. Madalyn recommends Tofu as an inexpensive alternative which can be marinated and/or prepared much the same as chicken, fish or other items. For lacto-ovo vegetarians, it is fairly easy to provide a balanced menu using a variety of egg, cheese and dairy dishes. For Vegans, Madalyn notes that there are many substitutions readily available including soy milk, soy yogurt, soy cheese, Seitan, Tempeh, egg replacer for baking, beans, nuts, seeds and a wide variety of grains. According to Madalyn, “The biggest hurdle I have found is getting the kitchen staff on board for trying new recipes. There are only so many ‘burgers’ a person can eat.” One product Madalyn does not recommend is 'Tofurky' which she describes as “a very expensive very salty and not very tasty turkey substitute.”

Additional Cost

Linda S. Landon, RD, LD works with Hutchinson Area Health Care in Minnesota, which is a 125 bed skilled nursing home. They currently have two residents who are Seventh-Day Adventists and follow a strict vegan herbalist diet with many more food preferences than vegans. Vegan food products are difficult to find, so Linda uses many vegan products purchased at the local grocery store or Seventh-Day Adventist store. In addition, they use a lot of tofu, beans, nuts, soy and meat analogs. Linda has written a selective vegan menu that attempts to follow the regular menu, while taking most of the vegan herbalist residents’ personal food preferences into consideration. The staff now knows what they need to prepare and these residents are more satisfied.

However, there is a definite cost increase in catering to these preferences. Linda estimates approximately \$100/week not including the time to shop and prepare these special items.

Resources for Vegetarian Diets

John A. Krakowski, RD, Food Safety Coach, Flanders, NY recommends the book, *Vegan in Volume* by Chef Nancy Berkoff, RD published by The Vegetarian Resource Group. In addition, the resources in the reference list are excellent references.

Sample Daily Meal Plan for a Well Balanced Lacto-Ovo Vegetarian Diet

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
¾ c Orange Juice ¾ c Oatmeal ¼ c Scrambled Egg 1 Slice Whole Wheat Toast 1 Tbs Jelly 1 tsp Margarine 1 c Milk Sugar, Salt, Pepper Coffee, Tea or Beverage	3 oz Soy Burger w/Gravy ½ c Seasoned Rice ½ c Seasoned Peas w/Mushrooms 1 c Green Salad w/ 1 Tbs Salad Dressing 1 Slice Bread 1 tsp Margarine ½ c Ice Cream 1 c Milk Sugar, Salt, Pepper Coffee, Tea or Beverage	6 oz Cream of Tomato Soup 3 oz Soy Simulated Chicken Patty (or chicken nuggets) ½ c Mashed Potato ½ c Chopped Spinach 1 Slice Bread 1 tsp Margarine 1 Baked Apple 1 c Milk Sugar, Salt, Pepper Coffee, Tea or Beverage
P.M. Snack		
¾ c Juice 2 oz cheese 6 soda crackers		

Bold/italicized items indicate differences from regular diet.

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