

Vegan and vegetarian sports nutrition guide

By ESSNA in collaboration
with TJ Waterfall, RNutr

ESSNA European
Specialist
Sports Nutrition
Alliance



Welcome!

Welcome to ESSNA's vegan and vegetarian guide to sports nutrition, created with registered plant-based sports nutritionist TJ Waterfall.

This guide was created to support and empower the growing number of vegan and vegetarian sports nutrition consumers and to ensure that everyone understands just how well the sports nutrition industry caters to plant-based diets.

There are many potential health, performance, and recovery benefits to plant-based diets, and sports nutrition products can play a useful role in supporting your active lifestyle. We will answer some of the most common questions surrounding vegan and vegetarian sports nutrition to ensure you're as knowledgeable and confident about consuming these products as we are.



TJ Waterfall



Check out ESSNA's range of other guides including Before, During and After Exercise Sports Nutrition, 12-step Guide to Sports Nutrition, Watch Your Protein guide, the Dos and Don'ts of Sports Nutrition and our guide to Home Based Sports Nutrition. Check out TJ Waterfall's resources on vegan nutrition, fitness and lifestyle [here](#).

Question 1: What's the difference between vegan and non-vegan sports nutrition? How do vegetarian products come into the mix?

Answer: Firstly, let's unpack some common terminology relating to vegan and vegetarian diets:

This is not to say that vegan or vegetarian diets need to be limited. Quite the opposite - an abundance of plant foods should be enjoyed, including cereals, grains, legumes, fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, herbs and spices... in fact, delicious plant-based versions of most cuisines from around the world can be adapted!

Now we know about the different types of diet, we can see which products are suitable for you:

Products that contain...	Pescatarian-friendly	Vegetarian-friendly	Plant-based	Vegan-friendly	Extra information
Traces of meat, such as chicken or turkey. These may be used in the form of flavouring and will be listed with the ingredients on the product's packaging.	X	X	X	X	Watch out for ingredients that you might not usually associate with meat, such as gelatin. Some products such as BCAAs can be derived from pork which may not be listed in the ingredients.
Fish products, such as fish oil, which may be used particularly in sports nutrition products designed to provide Omega-3 fats.	✓	X	X	X	Note there are also plant sources of omega-3 available
Eggs, or dairy products such as whey protein.	✓	✓*	X	X	These will be listed in bold in the ingredients as both are considered common allergens. *Look out for a vegetarian trademark to ensure no meat products have been used. Whey is not vegetarian if derived from cheese-manufacture which uses animal rennet
Products that are made entirely from plant-based ingredients without any animal-derived products.	✓	✓	✓	✓*	*Look out for a vegan trademark on the product's packaging to be sure it is animal- and cruelty-free.

Question 2: Can vegan sports nutrition products really help to support your active lifestyle and balanced diet?

Answer: Absolutely!

A large and growing number of successful vegan and vegetarian athletes, such as Serena Williams, Lionel Messi, and Lewis Hamilton, are proving that these diets can support world-class performance.

Lots of vegan and vegetarian products include the same nutrients as non-vegan products, but are simply sourced from plant-based ingredients instead. This makes them effective at supporting your active lifestyle. The nutritional value of sports nutrition products should always be listed on the packaging of the product.

Keep a look out for the following ingredients, which are the most important key nutrients of interest on a plant-based diet that will help to support your nutrition and active lifestyle:

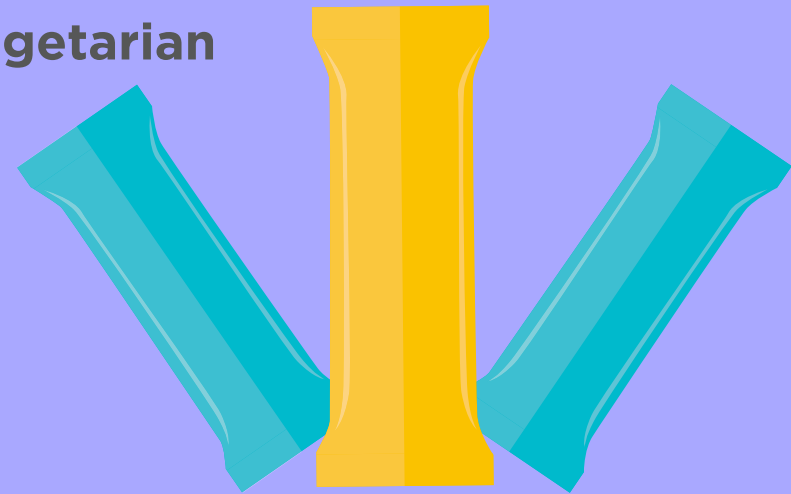
Question 3: Are vegan and vegetarian sports nutrition products easy to find?

Answer: Yes.

Vegan and vegetarian sports nutrition products are becoming increasingly accessible.

Plant-based diets are on the rise throughout Europe and the wider world. In the UK alone, the number of vegans quadrupled in the five years up to 2019, and by 2020 there were estimated to be around 1.5 million vegans. Across Europe, some sources claim that a whopping 31% now consider themselves vegetarian, pescatarian or flexitarian, a number that has doubled since 2012.

This means that nearly a third of all Europeans are at least significantly reducing the amount of meat and animal products they consume. Interestingly, 57% of flexitarians plan to become vegetarian and 8% want to go vegan, which suggests this rise will continue^[3]. And as the vegan and vegetarian market grows, so too does the demand for vegan and vegetarian sports nutrition products.



We have seen a sharp rise in the launch of plant-based sports nutrition products over the years. 14% of UK sports nutrition products launched in 2019 featured a vegan or vegetarian claim, up from 9% in 2014^[4]. This increase is typical of those across Europe. 21% of Europeans have said that they have bought plant-based sports nutrition products.^[5] This makes finding the right vegan and vegetarian products for you easier than ever before.

To meet this increase in demand, many sports nutrition brands are now offering vegan and vegetarian products and some brands are now entirely plant-based, which makes finding the right vegan and vegetarian products for you easier than ever before. This includes many ESSNA members, all of which abide by our safety rules. You can find a list of our members [here](#).

Question 4: Can vegan and vegetarian sports nutrition products help to boost my energy and performance?



Answer: Yes.

Leading health authorities, such as the World Health Organisation and the British Dietetic Association, acknowledge that plant-based diets can support healthy living in people of all ages, including athletes. A well-planned vegan or vegetarian diet can provide everything you need to thrive both in terms of health and performance. If you're experiencing tiredness on a meat-free diet, please contact a health professional as they will be able to help you by solving any medical problems that you might be experiencing.

To help with energy during exercise, there are lots of sports nutrition products, including vegan and vegetarian options, which include nutrients that can help you while exercising. Such nutrients include:

Question 5:

How can I make sure I'm consuming safe and legitimate vegan or vegetarian sports nutrition products?

Don't forget...

Avoid suspicious looking websites and products

We hope this guide has helped you to feel confident in your sports nutrition before, during and after exercise and that you are able to feel and perform at your best with healthy nutrition.

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^[1] <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d/>
^[2] <https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/press/news/161028>
^[3] <https://vegan2.com/blog/vegan2-nutrition-study-2020/>
^[4] Mintel. (2020). *A year of innovation in sports & performance nutrition*.
^[5] https://prowly-uploads.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/uploads/landing_page_image/image/265983/7215af9e9e6ba9b1279d555f919bb57a.pdf



ESSNA is the European trade association for any company operating in the sports nutrition sector. Our membership covers the whole sports nutrition supply chain, from the suppliers of top quality ingredients right through to the brands that turn these ingredients into innovative products and the retailers that sell them. For more information or support, please contact us by emailing info@essna.com or check out our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts.

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