



# Guide for **vegan** **prisoners**

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INTERNATIONAL VEGAN  
RIGHTS ALLIANCE



## What is veganism?

Veganism is a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude - as far as is possible and practicable - all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of humans, animals and the environment. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals.

## This booklet

If you are a vegan prisoner (or are the friend or relative of a vegan prisoner), this booklet will provide you with practical information to ensure that your needs are met. If you flip this booklet over you will find information aimed at prison staff. This includes nutrition advice and further information which you may also find helpful.

In this section of the booklet you will find information on:

- **Your rights as a vegan prisoner**
- **How to buy or request vegan products**
- **How to resolve grievances**

If you would like to request further copies of this booklet you can do so by contacting The Vegan Society:

**Telephone:** 0121 523 1730 / 0845 458 8244

**Address:** Donald Watson House, 34-35 Ludgate Hill, Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham, B3 1EH

**Email:** [advocacy@vegansociety.com](mailto:advocacy@vegansociety.com)

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*This booklet is for information and general guidance only. The information provided is not, and should not be considered, legal advice.*

## Your rights

Vegans in the UK are protected under the Human Rights Act 1998 and under the Equality Act 2010 in England, Wales and Scotland. As such, prison managers and staff are required to make suitable arrangements for vegan prisoners to avoid interfering with a vegan's human right to freedom of conscience, and are obliged to take all necessary steps to accommodate the needs of vegans to prevent direct or indirect discrimination.

## Diet

As a vegan prisoner, you should not be given any food containing animal products. You have a right to vegan food which contains all the nutrients needed to maintain good health. Information on how to provide this is in the back of this booklet, and The Vegan Society can provide further support on good catering practices.

## Supplements

Every vegan needs to ensure they have a reliable source of vitamin B12 in their diet. The easiest and cheapest way of doing this is through using a supplement. The Vegan Society markets a supplement called VEG1 which also contains vitamin D, iodine and selenium. It has been formulated by experts and is the most affordable vegan supplement we are aware of. We suggest speaking to your catering manager or welfare officer to see if this can be obtained.

## Dress

You should not be given any clothes made from animal materials, including leather, suede, wool, silk or fur. If required, prison staff should source vegan work boots for you.

## Toiletries

You should be given access to vegan toiletries.

## Work

You should not be expected to take part in any work which compromises your vegan beliefs. This includes working on prison farms and handling or preparing non-vegan ingredients in a prison kitchen. Alternative work should be offered.

## Medication

Currently all medication is required to be tested on animals by UK law. However, the definition of veganism includes the tenet 'as far as is practical and possible'. The Vegan Society does not recommend that vegans abstain from taking prescribed medications.

## How to buy/request vegan products

Canteen sheets are usually issued on a weekly basis in order for prisoners to order food, toiletries and other requirements. The amount you are permitted to spend will vary from prison to prison.

Prison Retail should make every effort to stock food, toiletries and other items for which there is a demand. To ensure equal opportunities, they also need to cater for their vegan population even if they are in the minority.

The National Product List contains a list of products from which the local Prison Retail Team chooses products they would like to stock. Therefore, you can request items which are not on your local canteen sheets, but are on the full National Product List.

Most prisons have a team of prisoners who decide what is stocked on the local canteen sheets, so your first port of call might be to find out who they are and ask to see the full canteen listing to discuss your requirements being added. If there is a product you would like to buy but which is not on the National Product List, you should speak to your Diversity Manager or Residential Governor. They may be able to add companies such as Holland and Barrett to their Facilities List. Once this has been arranged you can then purchase your requirements via a cash disbursement from your prisoners' monies.

## Resolving grievances

If you have a grievance there are various ways of trying to resolve the issue, as outlined below.

### Internal resolution

First try to resolve the problem by speaking to a relevant member of the staff, eg Wing/Landing Officers, Senior Officers or Catering Manager. If this is not successful then approach your Personal Officer, Diversity Manager or Residential Governor.

It is a good idea to keep an accurate note of any instances you wish to complain about, including details of dates, times and who was present. Keeping a diary of your food consumption will also be helpful should you need to raise an issue relating to your nutrition.

If you try to resolve the issue internally, initially with a written complaint, you are more likely to be eligible for legal aid in event that you need to take the complaint further.

## Complaint forms

Complaint forms should be issued to you within seven days of applying and a reply should be received usually within five days of completion. These are to be completed when other channels of complaint have failed.

If you are not happy with the response, the next step is to fill in an appeal about your complaint and then appeal to the Governor. Using form COMP1A, this must be made within a week of receiving the first response. You should receive a response within seven working days.

## External resolution

If you are still not happy with the response, or the Prison Service does not reply to you within six weeks, the next step is to write to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman within one month of receiving your final response.

**The Prisons & Probation Ombudsman**  
**Ashley House**  
**2 Monck Street**  
**London SW1P 2BQ**

**Tel:** 020 7035 2876

## Support

If you require assistance, you can speak in confidence to your prison's Independent Monitoring Board. The IMB are entirely independent of the prison establishment and have a wealth of experience on prisons and prisoner issues.

You can also contact the Prisoners' Advice Service. PAS take up prisoners' complaints about their treatment inside prison by providing free advice and assistance on an individual and confidential basis. They take legal action where appropriate and have solicitors on-hand to advise.

**Prisoners' Advice Service**  
**PO Box 46199**  
**London**  
**EC1M 4XA**

**Tel:** 020 7253 3323  
or 0845 430 8923

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## What is veganism?

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## This booklet

If you work in a prison, this booklet will provide you with practical information to help you to meet the needs of your vegan prisoners. At the back of this booklet you will find advice aimed at vegan prisoners. In this section of the booklet you will find:

- **Information on the rights of vegan prisoners**
- **Nutritional advice on how to meet your vegan prisoners' dietary requirements**
- **Catering tips and benefits**
- **Ingredients to avoid**

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## The rights of vegan prisoners

Vegans in the UK are protected under the Human Rights Act 1998 and under the Equality Act 2010 in England, Wales and Scotland. As such, prison managers and staff are required to make suitable arrangements for vegan prisoners to avoid interfering with a vegan's human right to freedom of conscience, and are obliged to take all necessary steps to accommodate the needs of vegans to prevent direct or indirect discrimination.

### Diet

A vegan diet is based on vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, beans, pulses and grains. Vegans do not eat any product which derives from an animal. Vegans should not be given any food containing animal products, and must be given access to food which contains all the nutrients needed to maintain good health. You can find information on vegan nutrition in the next few pages.

### Supplements

Every vegan needs to ensure they have a reliable source of vitamin B12 in their diet. The easiest and cheapest way of doing this is through using a supplement. The Vegan Society markets a supplement called VEG1 which also contains vitamin D, iodine and selenium. It has been formulated by experts and is the most affordable vegan supplement we are aware of. We strongly suggest making this supplement available to your vegan prisoners.

### Dress

All clothing supplied to prisoners should be made from non-animal materials. Vegans avoid wearing materials such as leather, suede, wool, silk or fur and should not be required to do so. Vegan work boots can be bought from vendors such as [vegetarian-shoes.com](http://vegetarian-shoes.com).

### Toiletries

Vegan prisoners should have access to appropriate toiletries. These products should not contain any ingredients of animal origin, and should not have been tested on animals. You can find a list of suitable products by using the Vegan Trademark search on The Vegan Society's website: [vegansociety.com/search](http://vegansociety.com/search).

### Work

Vegan prisoners should not be expected to work on prison farms. They should not be expected to handle or prepare non-vegan ingredients in a prison kitchen. Alternative work should be offered.

### Medication

Currently all medication is required to be tested on animals by UK law. However, the definition of veganism includes the tenet 'as far as is practical and possible'. The Vegan Society does not recommend that vegans abstain from taking prescribed medications.

## Nutritional advice

Well-planned vegan diets can provide all the nutrients that our bodies need. If you're catering for people who exclude animal products from their diets, there are several nutritional considerations that need to be taken into account, including the roles of fortified foods and supplementation.

## Getting the balance right

The following table provides guidance about how to balance the different food groups based on the principles of the UK's Eatwell Guide:

FOOD GROUP	SUGGESTED INTAKE	COMMENTS
Fruit and vegetables (fresh, tinned, frozen or dried), including orange varieties and leafy greens	At least 5 x 80g portions per day (30g for dried fruit)	In order to boost iron absorption, ensure meals contain a vitamin C source, such as pepper, broccoli, cabbage, oranges, pineapple or orange juice. Every day, offer a really rich source of carotenoids, such as sweet potato, carrots, spinach or apricots, and a good source of vitamin K, such as Brussels sprouts, cabbage, broccoli, spinach or spring greens
Starchy foods - ideally higher fibre choices, such as oats, wholemeal bread and sweet potato	Every meal	Some breakfast cereals are not suitable for vegans because they are fortified with vitamin D3 from sheep's wool. Wholemeal bread is a good source of zinc.
Protein-rich foods, such as beans, chickpeas, lentils, tofu, soya mince and other soya products, Vegan Quorn, peanut butter, cashew nuts and pumpkin seeds	Most meals	Tend to contain good amounts of iron and zinc too. Dry soya mince is an economical source of protein.
Nuts and seeds, especially those rich in omega-3 fat, such as walnuts or ground linseed	Daily e.g. six walnut halves (20g) or a tablespoon of ground linseed	If you can buy linseed in bulk and mill small batches as needed, this might work out a lot cheaper than offering walnuts
Calcium-rich foods, such as fortified foods and calcium-set tofu	At least 2 portions daily n.b. 1 portion - 200ml fortified plant milk OR 200g fortified soya yoghurt OR 70g calcium-set tofu (uncooked weight)	At least 3 litres of fortified plant milk should be available weekly to every vegan

## Nutrients that deserve special attention

It's important to provide a daily diet that contains good sources of iron, such as lentils, chickpeas, beans, tofu, cashew nuts, ground linseed, pumpkin seeds, kale, raisins and fortified breakfast cereal. Iron-rich food should be combined with a source of vitamin C to optimise absorption (see 'Fruit and vegetables' in table above for examples).

It is recommended that everyone in the UK uses a vitamin D supplement during autumn and winter as a minimum. Vegans also need to ensure reliable intakes of vitamin B12, iodine and selenium. Using a specially designed supplement like The Vegan Society's VEG 1 is a particularly good idea for vegans in prison. Although vitamin B12, iodine and selenium can be obtained from carefully selected foods, it may not be possible in a prison environment.

Take a look at the table below for further information:

NUTRIENT	SUGGESTIONS
Vitamin B12	Eat fortified foods (such as yeast extra, fortified plant alternatives to dairy, ready oats and dairy-free spread) at least twice a day providing a total of at least 3mcg (micrograms), use a daily supplement containing at least 10mcg, or use a weekly supplement containing at least 2000mcg
Vitamin D	Supplement during autumn and winter (all year if you do not regularly expose your skin to sunlight or you have darker skin). Vitamin D3 from lichen and vitamin D2 are vegan-friendly. Recommended dose is 10mcg per day.
Iodine	Arguably, a supplement is the best option. Recommended intake for adults is 140mcg per day.
Selenium	Eat a couple of Brazil nuts daily or supplement. Recommended daily intakes for adults are 60-75mcg.

## Benefits of vegan catering

- Vegan options can be enjoyed by most people:
  - Vegans, vegetarians and people who eat meat and fish
  - Those trying to limit their consumption of animal products
  - People with allergies to milk and/or eggs (if free from these allergens)
  - Vegan meals may be acceptable to people who eat Kosher or Halal food (discuss with individual)
- Research has associated vegan diets with the lowest emissions of carbon dioxide – a strong vegan offering helps to make your catering service sustainable
- It's easy to produce tasty meals that are rich in fibre and low in cholesterol-raising saturated fat, and provide multiple servings of fruit and vegetables

## Top tips for caterers

Ensure that your service offers a variety of balanced vegan meals

Consider making vegan options available to everyone because they can be enjoyed by most people, helping them to hit their fibre and 5-a-day targets and limit saturated fat

You can keep your menu simple by serving animal-free food options as standard e.g. keep the vegetable soup of the day dairy-free, create puddings without using dairy and eggs (these can be served with custard made using traditional custard powder and soya milk)

Ensure that dairy-free spread is available

Provide a weekly pack of extra supplies if the vegan menu does not meet nutritional need

Strive to minimise cross-contamination from non-vegan products as far as is reasonably practicable

Ensure access to a supplement designed for vegans like The Vegan Society's VEG 1, which provides reliable intakes of vitamins B12 and D, iodine and selenium  
It's a great idea to provide staff training about vegan nutrition

## Ingredients to avoid

Vegans don't eat anything that comes from an animal. This includes:

- **Meat, including chicken, fish or any kind of shellfish**
- **Milk from any animal, or products containing milk such as cheese, yoghurt, cream and mayonnaise**
- **Eggs, or products containing eggs**
- **Honey, gelatine or beeswax**

Here is a non-exhaustive list of common ingredients to avoid:

Albumen	Guanine	Royal jelly	Carmine or cochineal
Keratin	Shellac	Casein	Lactose
Tallow	Collagen	Lanolin	Whey
Gelatine	Propolis	E901, E120, E441, E913, E904, E545	

Please note that if a product carries a label which states that it 'may include traces of' an animal ingredient, this does not prevent it from being considered a vegan product.

## Vegan Trademark

If you are unsure whether a product is suitable for vegans, check if it carries the Vegan Trademark. If not, get in touch with the manufacturer for the most reliable and up to date information.



## Catering for vegan prisoners - summary

- Provide a variety of balanced vegan meals
- Provide a weekly pack of extra supplies if the vegan menu does not meet nutritional needs
- Provide at least 3 litres of fortified plant milk weekly
- Provide nuts or seeds rich in omega-3 fat daily, such as walnuts or ground linseed
- Provide dairy-free spread
- Ensure access to a supplement designed for vegans like The Vegan Society's VEG 1, which provides reliable intakes of vitamins B12 and D, iodine and selenium
- **Contact The Vegan Society for more information and guidance on 0121 523 1730**