

A
Deeper
Look
by Delisa Renideo

Help! I'm Vegan, but Can't Seem to Lose Weight!

We vegans often pride ourselves on being “able to eat as much as we want without gaining weight,” but if this were totally true, would there be any overweight vegans? Is there a catch somewhere?

First, let me say that many *are* able to lose weight easily after beginning a vegan diet. However, there are plenty of others who haven't had this experience. Some even *gain* weight after switching to a vegan diet. Statistically, however, vegans weigh less than people eating the Standard American Diet. So does it just work for some people and not others?

Our weight really does boil down to calories

Let's see what might be the problem for these virtuous but disheartened vegans.

in versus calories out. Calorie counters have known this for years, but calorie counting can be a real drag, so most

of us are de-lighted to learn that there is an easier way to lose and maintain a trim, healthy weight. And this is where the vegan diet comes in. But yes, there *is* a catch. It matters *what* you eat! Read on . . .

Some people are “junk food vegans.” They don't eat any animal products, but as you know, potato and tortilla chips, French fries, some candy, and soda pop are vegan. Junk food vegans aren't going to do their health or their weight any good. Others have heard that vegans can eat as much as they want and thus throw caution to the wind, indulging in lots of processed foods such as Earth Balance, Vegemise, and vegan desserts. They may also discover and eat a

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lot of soy-based sour cream, ice cream and cream cheese and lots of highly processed meat substitutes. Those won't help the scale, either! But some people really are trying to choose healthy vegan foods and still have trouble with weight, so let's see what might be the problem for these virtuous but disheartened vegans.

Vegetables only have about 100 calories *per pound!* You can definitely eat as many vegetables as you want with-out worrying about gaining weight. But what happens when you put vegan “butter” on them? Or cook them in oil? Fats and oils have 120 calories *per tablespoon!* Yes, even extra-virgin olive oil. You can unsuspectingly add a lot of calories by the way you cook or serve your low-calorie vegetables.

Salads are known for being low in calories. But what if you add a generous (but common) three tablespoons of oily dressing to that salad? You've



just added 200-300 calories to a salad that might have only had 30 calories in the vegetables. Be aware (beware) of these calorie-dense dressings.

Fresh fruits only have 200 - 300 calories *per pound.* Not bad! You can eat a lot of fresh fruit without worrying about the calories. One medium apple has only 72 calories. However, what if you put that apple in a pie? One smallish slice of apple pie has 411 calories.

But how about raisins? Aren't they just fruit? They ought to be a good choice. There are 434 calories in a cup of raisins. There are only 110 calories in a cup of grapes. So watch out for dehydrated fruits. They're concentrated calories!

If you used to eat candy bars for snacks, you might decide to

switch to trail mix instead. That sounds healthier, doesn't it? But what's in trail mix?

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Nuts and seeds at 700 - 900 calories per cup, and usually dried fruit

like raisins at 434 per cup, plus sometimes chocolate chips, at 1280 calories per cup. Trail mix averages about 700 calories per cup. Uh-oh. . .

So even if you have given up the obvious junk food, like potato chips (153 calories in a single serving bag) and Snickers bars (266 calories) you may be unknowingly consuming a LOT of calories.

So how can a vegan diet help us lose weight? How can we eat as much as we want and never have to be hungry on a diet again?

[Joel Fuhrman, M.D.](#), recommends the following for guaranteed weight loss, while providing optimal nutrition and filling us up:

- One pound (or more) of raw vegetables every day.
- One pound (or more) of cooked vegetables every day.
- Four fresh fruits every day.
- One cup (or more) of beans every day. (200 - 230 calories)

- Limit nuts to one ounce (150 - 200 calories), which is just a small handful.
- One cup whole grains or starchy vegetable, like potatoes.
- No oil added to any foods

This is a LOT of food to eat, and yet low in

calories. So a vegan diet composed of whole, unprocessed plants with no added oil, very few nuts and dried fruits, and

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unlimited amounts of fresh vegetables really does allow us to eat AS MUCH AS WE WANT without gaining weight. The natural fiber found in these foods really fills us up and helps us feel satisfied longer, too. As long as we choose the right foods, we really don't have to count calories or limit portion sizes. This same diet provides optimal nutrition, leaving us feeling and **looking** our best!



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