

'Flexitarian' eating: Part vegetarian, part not

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(HealthDay)—If you want to eat more vegetables and less meat, but don't want to give up meat altogether, there's an alternative.

It's called flexitarian—for flexible vegetarian. You primarily eat a [vegetarian diet](#), but you eat [meat](#) on certain days of the week or when the urge strikes.

Your part-time vegetarian status comes with no rules. You decide how much meat—ideally lean red meat and poultry—you want to have. But the main focus is on eating a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts and seeds.

The eating plan's flexibility also extends to how many days you go meatless. You might start with one to two days a week, then progress to three to four, and eventually to five meat-free days a week. On the meat days, try to limit portions to 4 to 8 ounces.

The no-rules aspect also gives you the option of including more than plant-based foods. Dairy, eggs, poultry and fish, in addition to meat, can fit in the flexitarian model now and then—if that's what you want.

However, remember that additions beyond strict vegetarian elements could affect whatever health benefits you might hope to achieve. For instance, researchers found that a strict vegetarian diet helped reduce the risk for type 2 diabetes by 34 percent, according to a 2016 study in *PLOS Medicine*. By comparison, the risk reduction for a flexitarian [diet](#) was 20 percent.

Whatever you choose, talk with your doctor or a nutritionist to make sure your health needs are being met.

More information: The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics has information on [how to meet your nutritional needs](#) with a vegetarian diet.

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