Vegan & Vegetarian

These groups have long embraced pulses. Pulses are often the primary protein source; one half-cup serving of cooked pulses is equivalent to a two-ounce serving of meat and a serving of vegetables. The variety of pulses and countless recipes available set the foundation for flavorful and potentially widely diverse vegetarian or vegan meal plans. It is possible to meet the protein requirements of vegetarians as supported by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics position paper [33]:

"Plant protein can meet protein requirements when a variety of plant foods is consumed and energy needs are met. Research indicates that an assortment of plant foods eaten over the course of a day can provide all essential amino acids and ensure adequate nitrogen retention and use in healthy adults; thus, complementary proteins do not need to be consumed at the same meal. A meta-analysis of nitrogen balance studies found no significant difference in protein needs due to the source of dietary protein. Based on the protein digestibility-corrected amino acid score, which is the standard method for determining protein quality, other studies have found that although isolated soy protein can meet protein needs as effectively as animal protein, wheat protein eaten alone, for example, may result in a reduced efficiency of nitrogen utilization. Thus, estimates of protein requirements of vegans may vary, depending to some degree on dietary choices. Food and nutrition professionals should be aware that protein needs might be somewhat higher than the Recommended Dietary Allowance in those vegetarians whose dietary protein sources are mainly those that are less well digested, such as some cereals and legumes."

When working with patients, the RD may:

- Educate the patient to incorporate a wide variety of pulses, grains, seeds and nuts in the diet.
- If there are concerns about the adequacy of protein intake, a consultation with the primary care physician and a review of the appropriate lab test will answer the question.
- For patients who are willing, support the inclusion of additional protein sources such as dairy and eggs.

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