



Introduction to Vegetarian/Vegan Eating

Subject: Introducing adults to the world of vegetarian/vegan eating and the implications for animals, the planet, and human health

Audience: Teenagers to adults

Time: 1 ½ hours

Audience Size: 15-20

Objectives:

- Participants will be able to identify the difference between vegetarian and vegan diets
- Participants will be able to list reasons how adding vegetarian/vegan foods to their diet protects animals, the planet, and their own health
- Participants will be able to plan a menu around vegetarian/vegan eating

Materials:

- A flip chart stand and pad + markers
- Tape
- “Vegan and Vegetarian Eating” handout (must be downloaded separately as PDF)
- NHES article on vegetarian/vegan eating (get it here: <http://www.nhes.org/articles/view/588>)
- If appropriate, vegetarian/vegan food could be brought in to share samples with participants (with recipes)
- If available, vegetarian/vegan cookbooks from library or other source could be shared with participants

Introduction:

The purpose of this workshop is to help individuals who are confused about the labels “vegetarian” and “vegan” and what it means to eat a vegetarian/vegan diet. Holding the session in a room where food can be served would give people a chance to taste vegetarian/vegan food. In fact, hosting a spaghetti dinner or other simple vegetarian/vegan meal in a fire house, church hall, or other public location would be an excellent way to introduce the concept of vegetarian/vegan dining. If you choose this route, you would have to secure the location, making sure food can be brought in or prepared on site. You would have to create the menu and determine who will supply the food. Publicity will be important to the success of such a venture. If there is to be a

charge, it must be reasonable or people will not come. Then, once everyone is eating, you can begin the workshop.

Procedure:

Introductions (10 minutes)

1. Have participants introduce themselves and give a brief summary of what they know about vegetarian/vegan eating and what they want to learn from this session.
2. Write what they know in one column and what they want to learn in another column on flip chart and tack around room.

Lecture - Definitions (15 minutes)

1. Many people are confused about the difference between vegetarian and vegan foods. The following definitions can either be on a PowerPoint slide, on flipchart, or in a handout.
 - a. Vegetarians eat all plant-based foods plus eggs and dairy, but do not eat the flesh of any animal, fish, or fowl.
 - b. Vegans eat all plant-based foods. They do not eat the flesh of any animal, fish, or fowl, nor do they eat the products of any animal, fish, or fowl, such as eggs, milk, and cheese.
2. Elaborate on the definitions and give examples.
 - a. Vegetarians enjoy a healthy plant-based diet that may include milk from a cow, cheese made from cow's milk, eggs from both hens and fish, and honey. However, they never eat the flesh of any animal, fish, or fowl.
 - b. Vegans do not eat animals, fish, or fowl nor do they eat the product of animals, fish, or fowl. Some vegans avoid honey as that is a product of a living being. Many vegans do not wear animal products, such as leather, silk, and wool. They choose from a wide variety of grains, beans, legumes, vegetables, and fruits to form the basis of their diet.

Activity: Why might one prefer to be vegetarian/vegan? (30 minutes)

1. Divide group into smaller groups of three or four people each. Have each group write on flipchart why they or someone they know would become or has become vegetarian/vegan. If a group is having trouble getting started on its list, coach them with suggestions like: fewer animals will have to be born or some major diseases are being linked to the foods we eat.
2. Have each group share their list and as best as you can, annotate the list as follows: reasons that affect animals put an "A" next to, reasons that affect the planet put a "P" next to, and reasons that affect human health but an "H" next to.
3. Have general discussion after all the groups have posted the benefits to see if other benefits can be added. Make sure the following benefits are noted in some way:

- a. Animals – by going vegan, you can save the lives of about 100 animals a year.
- b. Planet – factory farms pollute the surrounding ground water and cause problems for communities located nearby; they also cause more greenhouse gases that contribute to global climate change.
- c. Humans – food grown to feed meat animals can now be grown to feed the hungry. Personal health may improve as many diseases, from diabetes to cancer, have been traced to animal-based diets.

Activity: Planning a vegetarian/vegan meal (20 minutes)

1. Many people eat vegetarian/vegan foods without even knowing it. A peanut butter and jelly sandwich is a good example. Spaghetti with a meat-free sauce is another. Have participants list all the healthy vegetarian/vegan foods they now eat. These can include vegetables, fruits, cereals, rice, pasta (without eggs for vegan eating), etc.
2. Divide group into three groups. Have each group plan a vegetarian/vegan meal, one group plans for breakfast, one for lunch, and the third for dinner. Have groups list the menu on flipchart and post around room. Make sure all the foods listed are either vegetarian or vegan. If vegetarian, can they be made vegan?
3. If vegetarian/vegan food is available, make sure there is enough for everyone to sample and there are copies of recipes available for people to take home with them. There are numerous vegetarian/vegan cookbooks on the market. If the local library has a selection, bring some for the session to introduce people to the joys of vegetarian/vegan eating.

Close out – summary: (15 minutes)

1. Some people choose a vegetarian/vegan diet for ethical reason, others for religious reasons, some for health reasons. By choosing a vegetarian/vegan diet, you are saving animals' lives, protecting the planet, and enhancing your own health.
2. Start a Meatless Monday (www.meatlessmonday.com) group in your community.
3. Return to the comments made during the introductions: make sure everyone's questions/topics in the first column have been addressed.
4. Give everyone the handout "Vegan and Vegetarian Eating."
5. If food is left over, make sure there are containers so participants can take some home to family and friends.