

Talking about vegetarianism at your school...

A 10 point plan!!!

Talking to a group of your schoolmates about vegetarianism can be a great way to help them learn something new and you might even get them to begin thinking about making changes to what they eat.

1. Before you even start thinking about what you're going to say, the most important thing to do is ask your teachers if you will be allowed to give a talk!
2. Prepare yourself properly. It might be a good idea to start by making a list of why you think some lessons are interesting and others are boring... Then you can try to avoid all of the boring bits in your talk!
3. Decide how long you want to talk for and how long you think the audience will listen without losing interest. Be honest, anything between five to fifteen minutes can be long enough.
4. Do you want to use a computer to help you with some visual effects? We've got lots of useful information and pictures at www.youngveggie.org that you might want to use! If you've got a whiteboard or projector screen you can use a Vegetarian Society symbol or even a short slideshow of images (which you can make yourself or download from us) before the talk starts.
5. Decide what you are going to say!!!
6. If you're talking to your own class there most probably isn't much point introducing yourself, but if it's a school or year assembly then it's always worth telling everyone who you are, even if you think that most of the audience already know.
7. Start by describing what a vegetarian is, what we eat and what we don't eat. There will usually be someone who thinks that veggies eat fish!
8. You might want to explain why you went veggie and all the other reasons for giving up eating animals. If you're feeling really confident you might also want to let people ask you questions after you've finished.
9. You'll have to change the personal bits about me but how about starting with something like...

"Hello, my name is *Jamie* and I'm going to talk to you for a few minutes about being a vegetarian. Vegetarians don't eat any meat or fish. Sometimes people who eat fish claim to be veggies but fish has never been part of a vegetarian diet because fish are animals. They might not seem as cuddly as baby lambs but fish do feel pain like all other animals. I've been a veggie for *24 years* and I stopped eating meat and fish when I learnt about where our food comes from, the conditions that animals are kept in to feed us and that we don't need meat or fish to keep us healthy.

Most people who go veggie believe it is wrong to kill animals for food and are opposed to the cruelty that kills over 2 million land animals every day in the UK. It can be very

depressing and upsetting to see pictures of the process that converts a living animal into the meat on some people's plates.

Some religions, including Hinduism promote a vegetarian diet and about a ¼ of the world's population enjoys a veggie diet.

Some people go veggie because they care about the environment. What we choose to eat has a big impact on the planet. Veggie diets in the UK use about 3 times less resources than diets with meat in them. Did you know that you have to feed 4kg of food to a pig to get 1kg of pork or 7kg of food to a cow to get 1kg of beef.

There are also people who become veggie for health reasons. Well-balanced veggie diets provide all the nutrients and vitamins anyone could ever need, they follow all of the government's guidelines for healthy eating and have a wide-range of health benefits. Veggie food is suitable for all ages and veggie diets tend to be lower in fat and higher in fibre too. But, like everyone else, we've got to make sure we get our 5 portions a day of fruit and vegetables!

Veggies eat all types of food, Italian, Indian, Chinese, Greek, Spanish, French, African and of course British... the list is endless. Veggies eat roasts, fry-ups, barbecues, salads, pizzas, chillis, bolognese, curries, chips and chocolate! If you have a favourite meal that is based on meat it is always easy to adapt them to be vegetarian and at the same time, come up with something more tasty and healthier for you. We even eat sausages, burgers, and pies, it's just that ours don't have meat in them! They are usually made from soya beans or mixed vegetables.

Even if you think that you'll never be able to give up meat because you like the taste of it, there are loads and loads of foods in the supermarkets that copy the taste, texture and smell of meat but don't come with the same unhealthy side-effects or bad effects on the planet.

The most common questions I get asked as a vegetarian are where do I get my protein and iron from? Protein helps your body to grow and repair itself and everyone's protein needs are automatically met by well-balanced, varied diets. Good sources of protein are beans, peas, nuts, seeds, rice, eggs, milk products, lentils and soya. Soya is a very good source of protein and is found in veggie sausages, burgers, pot noodles, tofu and loads more food.

Iron is essential for making red blood cells and is found in leafy green vegetables, peas, beans and lentils, wholemeal bread, dried fruit and pumpkin seeds. Even meat eaters get almost all of their iron from veggie sources. Even if you're not a veggie and are worried about getting enough iron try eating or drinking something high in vitamin C (perhaps a glass of orange juice) with any foods that are high in iron. This can triple the amount of iron absorbed by your body.

I always end by asking the audience if they want to ask any questions (you don't have to do that though!) and tell them that they can find out more about going veggie by taking a look at www.youngveggie.org

10. Take a bow! (And don't forget to let us know how it went...)

Please e-mail education@vegsoc.org if you have any questions about giving a talk at school!