

Ensuring access to **Vegan Food in Hospitals**



PLANT-BASED
Health Professionals UK

Promoting Sustainable Health and Nutrition

Being admitted to hospital can be a stressful time.

An additional source of stress for vegans and those following a plant-based diet can be accessing appropriate meals.

Know your rights

Veganism comes within the scope of international human rights provisions and vegans in the UK are protected under human rights and equality law.

This means that hospitals have an obligation to ensure that they do not interfere with a vegan's right to freedom of conscience, and a responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to avoid any discrimination on the grounds of veganism.

In plain language, this means hospitals must ensure patients have access to vegan meals.

This should be **inclusive of any allergies or intolerances you have as well.** For example, gluten-free vegan meals should be available if required.

Getwell NHS Hospital Trust	
Please choose	
Breakfast	Vegan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Lunch	Vegan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Dinner	Vegan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Enjoy your meal	

Every hospital should also have an **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy** available on the public website outlining its commitment to the Equality Act 2010.

Vegan meals in hospitals



All hospitals in the UK provide vegan meals, although the quality and range will vary from hospital to hospital.

Vegan meals are either highlighted on the main hospital menu or are found under a separate vegan or 'special' menu.

You have to ask specifically for the vegan or 'special' menu

How to choose meals in hospitals

Every morning you will be provided with the food menu by the catering or domestic staff and will be **asked to select on a piece of paper all the meals you would like to eat that day.**

Sometimes patients may not be able to read the menu or make the selection for themselves on the paper provided. In this case, you can either **ask the member of the domestic staff who comes to collect the paper** to help you select the correct option or you can **ask the nurse looking after you** to help you select vegan meals for the day.



**Can you help
me
please?**

What to do if you cannot access vegan meals



Often the lack of vegan food options for patients comes down to miscommunication and can usually be easily resolved.



If you are not getting vegan meals then you should **first let the nurse looking after you know**, and they should be able to order you an appropriate meal from the catering staff. If your own nurse is not able to help then **ask to speak to the nurse in charge or the ward matron.**

A relative or friend can do this on your behalf if you are not able to communicate your wishes for yourself.

If despite communicating your needs to your clinical team you are still not receiving vegan meals then you should contact the **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** at your hospital. You can find PALS officers in your hospital [here](#). They can usually be contacted by telephone or email.

Once you have been discharged from hospital and recovered from your treatment, you might wish to write to the hospital if you feel there could be an improvement in the quality of vegan meals provided, or to say 'thank you' when they have done well.

[Here](#)

you can find a very helpful letter template from the Vegan Society.

It would be very unusual to not be able to resolve any issues through the PALS team. However, if you do not feel your problems accessing appropriate meals have been resolved, then write a formal complaint letter to PALS and the hospital Chief Executive Officer (CEO). You can find the name of the hospital CEO on your hospital's website.

If you are unable to write or email, then ask the nurse looking after you to help or ask a friend or relative to do this on your behalf.



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Help from outside the hospital and support groups

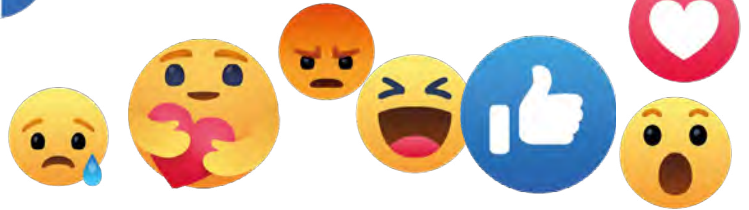
In the rare situation that you are struggling to access appropriate meals, you might find help from online support groups.



For example, there may be people in your **local vegan Facebook group** who might bring food into the hospital for you. There is also the **Vegan Hospital Food Network Facebook group** where you might be able to ask for a local person to support you.

If you would like to share photos of your hospital food to raise awareness, good or bad, there is a Facebook group:

Vegan Hospital Food – Hits & Misses



You can also contact the **Vegan Society** for further help and guidance

Consider writing an advanced statement

People with psychiatric conditions or those who have conditions that affect their capacity to make informed decisions may not always be able to advocate for themselves when in hospital.

You can always ask a chaperone for help with this (friend / carer / family member).

If you think this could apply to you, then it's worth considering writing an advanced statement to formally document your dietary requirements.

Useful resources



GOVEGANWORLD

Viva!



Catering for Everyone by the Vegan Society.

Vegan Rights Sample Letter by Go Vegan World.

V for Life, a charity for older vegans has useful resources including a **self-advocacy guide**.

Plant-Based EatWell Guide by Plant-Based Health Professionals UK.

Easy Vegan Catering Guide by Viva!