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MEET THE MEATLESS: HOW VEGGIE BURGERS AND HOT DOGS RATE WITH NUTRITION FACTS

CHICAGO –The summer grilling season is in full swing, and all over the country, people are gathering for Fourth of July celebrations, backyard barbecues, campsite cookouts and tailgate parties. But as vegetarian diets grow in popularity, the standard fare of hamburgers and hot dogs may need meatless counterparts in order to satisfy all guests or family members. While veggie burgers are widely available, which products offer the best nutrition? Registered Dietitian and American Dietetic Association spokesperson Dawn Jackson Blatner, looked at the nutrition facts of some of the most popular brands of meatless burgers and hot dogs (see accompanying chart).

The nutrition low-down on veggie burgers and dogs

- Most veggie burgers with 10 grams of protein or less contain vegetables such as mushrooms, onions, celery, carrots, bell peppers, tomatoes, spinach, broccoli, zucchini and whole grains such as brown rice, rolled oats, and bulgur wheat.
- Most veggie burgers with more than 10 grams of protein contain primarily soy protein and wheat gluten with very little actual vegetables or whole grains.
- Many brands offer vegan options without animal products such as eggs or cheese. However, just because it is vegan doesn't necessarily mean it has more vegetables or less protein than non-vegan versions.
- Veggie hot dogs have many nutrition advantages over traditional meat hot dogs. On average they have fewer calories, less fat, less sodium and more protein than your standard frank.

Nutritional advantages of veggie burgers: Less fat, more fiber

- Veggie burgers typically contain three times less total fat and seven times less saturated fat than average beef and turkey burgers. On average, veggie burgers have 3 grams of total fat and 0.5 grams of saturated fat while average meat burgers contain 10 grams of total fat and 3.5 grams of saturated fat.
- Veggie burgers typically contain an average of 3 to 4 grams of fiber, which classifies it as a good source. Meat burgers contain no fiber.

Nutritional disadvantages of veggie burgers: More sodium, less protein

- Veggie burgers typically contain 5 times more sodium than unseasoned beef or turkey burgers. The sodium range of veggie burgers is between 250 to 500 milligrams per burger with the average being around 350 mg. This represents 15 percent of the daily value of sodium, which is considered a moderate but not high amount.
- Veggie burgers typically contain two times less protein than beef or turkey burgers. The protein range of veggie burgers is between 5 to 15 grams per burger with the average being around 11 grams. Though veggie burgers have less protein than meat burgers, on average they contain 22 percent of the daily value of protein, which classifies it as an excellent source.

Common allergens in meatless burgers and hot dogs

- Not all meatless burgers and hot dogs are for everyone, and people with food allergies should pay particular attention to ingredients. Of the veggie products we examined, soy is in every one and wheat is in all but one. Eggs, dairy and nuts are also present in many of the products. However, meatless products that do not contain soy, wheat or other common allergens are available.

Preparation tips for pleasing the crowd.

“Arguably if food doesn’t taste good, people are less likely to eat it even if it does wear an impressive nutrition label,” says Blatner. “While some veggie burgers are meant to look and taste ‘like meat,’ many popular brands have visible chunks of vegetables such as mushrooms, carrots and peppers—suggesting that satisfying meatless fare may not depend entirely on a successful imitation.” Blatner suggests these cooking tips:

- If you are preparing meatless burgers or hot dogs on a grill, use a cooking spray to prevent them from sticking or falling apart. Grill them over a low-medium heat in an area with no direct flame so they heat through without drying out.
- Some veggie burgers and hot dogs may grill better than others, so try baking in an oven or toaster oven, microwaving or heating in a skillet to see which works best for you.

“Another delicious and healthy option is making your own veggie burgers,” says Blatner. “There are dozens of recipes available online and in cookbooks, so don’t be afraid to try your hand at homemade veggie burgers.”

For practical guidance and expertise on incorporating vegetarian fare into your family’s diet, visit a registered dietitian.

The American Dietetic Association is the world’s largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. ADA is committed to improving the nation’s health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy. Visit the American Dietetic Association at www.eatright.org.

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VEGGIE BURGER BRAND	STYLE	Calories	Total Fat	Sat. Fat	Cholesterol	Sodium	Carbohydrate	Fiber	Sugar	Protein	Allergen
Amy's	All American (vegan)	120	3 g	0 g	0 mg	390 mg	15 g	3 g	2 g	10 g	nuts, soy, wheat
Boca	All American Classic	140	5 g	1.5 g	5 mg	500 mg	9 g	4 g	1 g	15 g	soy, dairy, eggs, wheat
Boca	Original Vegan (vegan)	70	0.5 g	0 g	0 mg	280 mg	6 g	4 g	0 g	13 g	soy, wheat
Dr. Praeger	California (vegan)	110	4.5 g	0.5 g	0 mg	250 mg	13 g	4 g	1 g	5 g	soy
Garden Burger	The Original	100	3 g	1 g	10 mg	400 mg	18 g	5 g	<1 g	5 g	soy, dairy, wheat
Garden Burger	Garden Vegan (vegan)	80	1 g	0 g	0 mg	270 mg	12 g	4 g	0 g	9 g	soy, wheat
MorningStar Farms	Grillers Original	130	6 g	1 g	0 mg	260 mg	5 g	2 g	<1 g	15 g	soy, dairy, eggs, wheat
MorningStar Farms	Garden Veggie Patties	110	3.5 g	0.5 g	0 mg	350 mg	9 g	3 g	1 g	10 g	soy, dairy, eggs, wheat
Yves	Meatless Beef Burger (vegan)	110	4 g	0 g	0 mg	440 mg	8 g	2 g	<1 g	14 g	soy, wheat
MEAT BURGER	STYLE	Calories	Total Fat	Sat. Fat	Cholesterol	Sodium	Carbohydrate	Fiber	Sugar	Protein	Allergen
USDA Beef Burger (20% fat)	1 patty, grilled 2.7 ounces	209	13.7 g	5.2 g	70 mg	58 mg	0 g	0 g	0 g	19.8 g	
USDA Beef Burger (5% fat)	1 patty, grilled 2.9 ounces	140	5.4 g	2.4 g	62 mg	53 mg	0 g	0 g	0 g	21.6 g	
USDA Turkey Burger (8% fat)	1 patty, grilled 2.9 ounces	193	10.8 g	2.8 g	84 mg	88 mg	0 g	0 g	0 g	22.4 g	

VEGGIE HOT DOG BRAND	STYLE	Calories	Total Fat	Sat. Fat	Cholesterol	Sodium	Carbohydrate	Fiber	Sugar	Protein	Allergen
Lightlife	Smart Dog (vegan)	45	0 g	0 g	0 mg	310 mg	2 g	1 g	1 g	8 g	soy, wheat
MorningStar Farms	Veggie Dog	50	0.5 g	0 g	0 mg	410 mg	5 g	<1 g	2 g	7 g	soy, dairy, eggs, wheat
Yves	Good Dog (vegan)	70	3.5 g	0 g	0 mg	430 mg	1 g	0 g	<1 g	8 g	soy, wheat
Yves	Meatless Hot Dog (vegan)	50	0.5 g	0 g	0 mg	400 mg	2 g	0 g	<1 g	10 g	soy, wheat
MEAT HOT DOG BRAND	STYLE	Calories	Total Fat	Sat. Fat	Cholesterol	Sodium	Carbohydrate	Fiber	Sugar	Protein	Allergen
Ball Park	Standard Hot Dog	180	16 g	6 g	45 mg	550 mg	4 g	0 g	2 g	6 g	
Oscar Meyer	98% Fat Free Hot Dog	40	0.5 g	0 g	15 mg	470 mg	3 g	0 g	1 g	5 g	
Oscar Meyer	Turkey Dog	100	8 g	2.5 g	30 mg	510 mg	2 g	0 g	1 g	5 g	