

Congratulations on making it to Phase 2 of the Vital Plan Diet!



Initial Reintroduction & Discovery Phase

(Length: 1 to 3 months)

The process of starting with a very low-reactive food list and then gradually adding back foods is called an **elimination diet**. It is a tedious process, but because food reactions are so individual and so variable, it is the only practical way to identify problem foods.

By now, your digestive function should be normalizing, which means your culinary margins can be expanded. In Phase 2, you can continue to eat everything on the Phase 1 grocery list, and also begin to systematically reintroduce foods to your diet as you watch how your body reacts to them. Pay close attention to flare-up of any symptoms. If symptoms have not increased over several days, that food can be left on the list.

The absence of intestinal symptoms is a sign that the gut is regaining health. **Once the gut barrier is back intact, oxalates are less likely to “leak” across.** Therefore, vegetables and fruits containing oxalates are the first group to be reintroduced.

Next, you may want to add **raw apples, pears, peaches, plums, and apricots**. Try a smoothie. Use grass-fed whey protein powder and rice or oat milk. Later you can try coconut or almond milk. Avoid green smoothies, especially with raw kale, until the gut is well healed.

When the gut is well recovered, lectins become less of a problem, but you should still be mindful of the potential for damage. Carefully, and individually, add **oatmeal, brown rice, roasted pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and sunflower butter**.

Food sensitivities take a long time to resolve and sometimes never resolve completely. **Go slowly with high protein foods.** If you react to something, wait several months until recovery progresses further, then come back to it again. Immune reactions to foods can sometimes be accompanied by more acute allergic-type reactions such as rash and itching skin.

Mung beans and lentils are the easiest beans on the digestive system. Soak them overnight and cook them well.

Try adding **pasture-raised eggs**. Eggs are the world's best source of protein and contain many vital nutrients, but many people are very sensitive to egg protein.

Next, try **other meats and seafood**.

Coffee can be added back in limited amounts after intestinal symptoms have resolved. During Phase 2, other cooking methods can be used. You can start grilling again, but never place food over an open flame, and reduce the heat to prevent charring. Baking is also an option, but typical baked goods made with flour should be avoided.

Initial Reintroduction List

Vegetables

- Sweet potatoes, okra
- Artichoke (moderately high in oxalates, but very gut friendly)
- Celery (cooked at first, later raw)
- Spinach (cooked at first, later raw)

Sweet potatoes are relatively high in oxalate, but otherwise are very palatable and easy to digest. Once intestinal symptoms start to subside, try adding in sweet potatoes. Sweet potatoes are a reasonable food for any meal, even breakfast.

Okra is also high in oxalate, but the “slime” associated with okra is excellent for protecting intestinal mucosa from lectin damage.

Fruits

- Apples, pears, plums, apricots, peaches (raw or cooked; peeled or not)
- Melons, such as watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew
- Citrus fruits, such as oranges, grapefruit, limes, lemons

Seeds

- Oats (steel cut, rolled)
- Brown rice (sprouted rice has lower lectins)
- Homemade granola (made from oats)
- Pumpkin seeds
- Seeds (including sunflower, sesame, flax, chia)
- Rice crackers
- Sesame seed butter (tahini; used to make hummus)
- Mung beans and lentils (washed, soaked overnight, and well cooked)

- Garbanzo beans (canned or soaked overnight, and well cooked)

The fats in nuts (and other seeds) go rancid very quickly with exposure to air. The giveaway to the presence of rancid fats is stale smell. If nuts, nut butters, or other seeds smell stale, do not eat them; rancid fats are very bad for you.

Flax and chia seeds are both good sources of omega-3 fatty acids, fiber, and antioxidants. They also contain plant protective substances called lignans. Unlike other plant protective substances, however, lignans are very beneficial and have been shown to have anticancer properties, especially breast cancer. Flax seeds must be ground to gain benefit. Chia seeds can be used whole or ground. Chia is a desert plant. When exposed to water, the seeds break apart and form a gel. This not only adds an important form of fiber to your diet, but also adds a new dimension in food preparation.

Mung beans and lentils should be thoroughly washed and preferably soaked overnight with several water changes before thorough cooking.

Meat

- Beef (grass-fed)
- Bison (grass-fed)
- Eggs (pasture-raised, organic)
- Goat (grass-fed)
- Lamb (grass-fed)
- Seafood and shellfish (including shrimp, crab, lobster, scallops, oysters, mussels)
- Wild elk
- Wild venison

Finding high-quality meat at a standard grocery store can be a challenge. Natural or organic groceries are a better choice. Local area farms are often the best source of all. If you're looking for a great reference, head over to eatwild.com for more information.

Dairy or Dairy-like

- All nut milks (almond, cashew, coconut, etc.) Be aware that nut and soy sensitivities are common.
- All grain milks (hemp)
- Cow's milk (lactose-free, organic, or grass-fed)
- Goat milk products (grass-fed)
- Kefir (organic or grass-fed)
- Lamb's milk products (grass-fed)
- Soy milk (organic)
- Yogurt (organic or grass-fed)

Oils

- Coconut oil
- Ghee
- Nut oils (watch for reactions to these in particular)

Ghee, the backbone of Indian cooking, is butter with the milk solids removed. The fats in ghee (which include saturated fat, omega-6, and omega-3 fatty acids) are anti-inflammatory and, in limited amounts (2 tsp per day), actually decrease risk of cardiovascular disease. Ghee is good for digestion and stimulates bile flow. It is also a great brain tonic.

Ghee can be made easily by simmering grass-fed pure butter (look for Kerrygold) for about 20 minutes until the water portion is evaporated and milk solids settle to the bottom of the pot. Ghee is the golden “butter oil.” Pour it off into a separate container to use for cooking. Ghee has a long unrefrigerated shelf life, but refrigeration is recommended. Note that refrigeration will turn it to a solid.

Condiments

All herbs, spices, and vinegars are allowed in Phase 2. Proceed slowly with the addition of peppers (cayenne, ancho, etc.) and soy-based condiments (soy sauce, miso, etc.), as they tend to be more reactive for some people.

Beverages

- Black tea (limited)
- Carbonated water (unsweetened or lightly sweetened)
- Coffee (limited)

Sweeteners

- Blackstrap molasses (limited to 1-2 tsp per day)

Molasses contains a high level of antioxidants compared to other sweeteners, and high concentrations of essential minerals. Over the ages, it has been associated with a wide range of health benefits.

[The Vital Plan Diet](#) contains complete grocery lists and is loaded with food ideas and recipes. If you are still learning how to cook and plan meals, it will help you along your way.

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