

There are low-salt options out there, like the mushroom-based fake meat from local brand Fable Food Co, with only 173mg of sodium per 125g serve. At the moment it's only available in restaurants, like Bungalow 8 in Sydney, Third Wave Cafe in Melbourne and even in London at Heston Blumenthal's The Perfectionists' Café, but there are plans for retail products. Fable's slow-cooked-style products are made with shiitake mushrooms and only a handful of other ingredients.

Fable founder Michael Fox is a vegan, but he says the faux-meat industry isn't aiming for diners already ordering the mushroom patty on their burger. "We're targeting that flexitarian customer who still loves the taste and texture of meat, but wants to reduce their meat consumption," he says. "It all ties in with our objective of having a minimally processed, healthy, wholefood base."

The only sting is that Fable's products have more saturated fat than some cuts of red meat, thanks to its dose of coconut oil. Turns out it's hard to have your fake meat and eat it, too.

## TIPS FOR PLANT LOVERS

"With all these [fake-meat] products, people automatically think they're healthy because they're plant-based, but they're still a convenience food," explains dietitian Melissa Meier. "The lure is that it takes out the guesswork and time in the kitchen, it's easier to throw a plant-based patty on a burger bun than it is to soak legumes overnight. People think they're eating a healthy meal but they may not be — there's so much rubbish in supermarkets that say plant-based."

When it comes to how much fake meat is too much, balance is key. "It comes down to the idea that as long as you're mainly eating wholefoods, you'll be OK," Meier says. "Of course it's OK to have things like sausages or vegan meat every now and then. All foods can fit into a healthy diet — as long as the majority of it is healthy, wholefoods."

While Meier says there's no set rule as to how many ingredients on the label are too many, common sense should prevail. "Generally I think a handful of ingredients is fine, but if it becomes extensive and contains lots of words or numbers you don't recognise, it's probably not healthy," she tips.

The Heart Foundation recommends that products with less than 120mg of sodium per 100g are best, and options with less than 400mg of sodium per 100g are still good choices.

Meier believes it's unhelpful to think of red meat as a 'bad food' that should be eliminated. "Plant-based is such a buzzword, but it doesn't have to mean plant-only," she says. "Meat is a really good source of high-quality protein, zinc and vitamin B12. A healthy way to eat is mostly plants with a little meat and animal products if you wish. A vegan diet isn't problematic either, as long as it's a well-balanced eating plan that involves legumes, wholegrains, fruit and vegetables. But it takes work."

Turland adds that choosing ethical meat and having it as a treat is another viable option: "I think simple, fresh vegies and ethically sourced meat is always a better option than anything made in a lab by scientists."

**Meat vs. fake meat: which is healthier?**

Plant-based 'meat' can contain wholefoods but also refined ingredients, plus oil and salt. Here's how they compare...

Coles Beef Sausages (100g)	Lean fillet steak (100g)	Beyond Meat patties (100g)	Fable Food Co fake meat (100g)
772 kJ, 14.5g protein, 5.7g saturated fat, 503mg sodium	570kJ, 22g protein, 2g saturated fat, 60mg sodium	926kJ, 18g protein, 5g saturated fat, 345mg sodium	1063kJ, 9g protein, 12.9g saturated fat, 138mg sodium

## What happens to your body when you go vegan?

From your tastebuds to your waistline, here's what to celebrate and what to watch out for as your body adapts to its new diet...

### First few weeks

You may feel your energy levels spike as you cut out meat, which can be difficult for your body to digest. Your bathroom habits will change as you introduce more vegetables — which means more fibre. Your tastebuds may also transform as they adjust to your new eating regimen.

### At six months

You'll probably lose weight, because there are less kilojoules in plant-based proteins. Chances are your skin will clear up, too, as dairy consumption has been linked

to breakouts. On the health front, your risk of heart disease and stroke should drop as you cut out cholesterol from red meat. By cutting the sugar and salt found in processed foods, you'll also lowering your risk of diabetes.

### After six months

The health benefits of going vegan are the same, but you may also suffer some deficiencies. You may not get enough iron, vitamin D, zinc, B12 and/or calcium, so it's a good idea to see a dietitian to set up a balanced eating plan or take supplements to ensure you don't become deficient.

**bioisland®**  
In store now.

Always read the label and follow the directions for use. Vitamin, mineral and nutritional supplements can only be of assistance if the dietary intake is inadequate. This medicine may not be right for you. Read the label before purchase.

**Available at**

CHC73802-0719