

Vegetarian Children



Some families choose to follow a vegetarian diet. While children need extra nutrients for growth and development a well-planned vegetarian diet offers all they need.

Different Types of Vegetarianism

Lacto-ovo vegetarians – eat plant foods, milk and milk products, and eggs.

Lacto vegetarians – eat plant foods, milk and milk products.

Vegans – eat only plant foods. Vegans eat nothing from animal origin eg gelatine, milk, etc. This requires careful planning - if your child is not eating milk products or eggs ask your GP or practice nurse about seeing a Dietitian for further advice. Supplementation is usually needed to ensure an adequate nutrient intake.

Breastfeeding Mother & Baby

- If you are following a vegan diet supplement your diet with vitamin B12 (2.6 µg per day). If you cover up from the sun you will also need a vitamin D supplement (10 µg per day). Talk to your GP or Plunket nurse about suitable supplements.
- Include foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids - flaxseed oil and linseed, walnuts and walnut oil, canola oil, soybean oil, soybeans, tofu.
- Initially, feeding a vegetarian baby is similar to any other baby – breast milk is best as it is specially made for your baby. If you cannot breastfeed use an infant formula until baby is 12 months old.
- Between four and six months solids can be introduced. All babies start out life as vegetarians as their first foods include infant cereals, fruit and vegetables. As the variety of foods increases, introduce meat alternatives so that baby is not missing out on any nutrients.

Introducing First Foods

When baby can hold head up, use tongue to move food, shows signs of chewing movements (from 6 months):

- Baby rice or baby cereal
 - Pureed apple, pear, apricot, peach or ripe mashed banana
 - Pureed kumara, kamo kamo, pumpkin, potato, carrot, marrow or avocado
- (Honey should not be given to babies under six months).*

This information is not intended to replace the advice of your doctor or individual consultation with a Registered Dietitian. This information may only be used in its entirety.

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When baby can sit, is interested in finger foods and starting to bite; some teeth are present (6-7 months):

- Egg yolk
- Cooked parsnips, yams, courgettes, green beans, taro, puha, yams, cauliflower, broccoli, melon, nectarine, nashi pears, plums (all without skin or seeds)
- Toast fingers and rusks but only use low fibre ones

When baby is interested in a range of food and different texture – good chewing and biting (8-9 months):

- Soy foods, such as tofu, tempeh and soy yoghurt
- Cooked silverbeet, spinach, cabbage, creamed corn and raw or cooked tomatoes
- Well-cooked, pureed dried peas and beans such as lentils and chickpeas
- Orange, kiwifruit, pineapple and berry fruit
- Bread and pasta
- Yoghurt, cottage cheese, grated cheese, ice cream, unless there is a family history of allergy
- Peanut butter (smooth), unless there is a family history of allergy

Foods suitable from 12 months:

- Plain pasteurised whole milk, soymilks, and egg white.

Vegetarian Children (1-12 years)

- Vegetarian children need a wide variety of foods to meet their nutritional needs.
- Many vegetarian foods are bulky. Children's stomachs may be too small to eat all the food they need for activity and growth. Therefore, serve small meals often. Offer a range of vegetables and fruit, breads and cereals, legumes, nuts and seeds, milk and milk products and eggs. Use a range of breads: white, wholemeal and wholegrain; avoid breakfast cereals with added bran; offer brown and white pastas and rice.
- Vegetarian children need food with iron such as wholegrain cereal and bread, lentils, cooked dried peas and beans e.g. baked beans, dried fruit and dark green leafy vegetables. Serve these foods with fruit and vegetables high in vitamin C such as tomatoes, kiwifruit and oranges to help iron absorption.
- If your child does not drink milk, give other drinks such as soy milk that has added calcium and vitamin B12. Fat-reduced milks are not recommended for vegetarian children under five.

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- Children following a vegan diet need high-energy foods. These include legumes and legume spreads eg hummus; nut butters, ground and whole nuts; avocados; dried fruit and dried fruit spreads; tahini (sesame butter).
- Vitamin B12 supplementation is usually required for vegan children. Talk to your GP or Plunket Nurse.

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Daily Food Guide for Vegetarian Children

	No of serves required	No of serves required	No of serves required
FOOD GROUP	1-2 Years	3-5 Years	5-12 Years
Protein: Eggs, nuts, dried peas, beans or lentils One serving = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 egg • ¾ cup cooked or canned peas, beans or lentils • 2 Tbsp peanut butter • ¾ cup tofu/tempeh • ½ cup nuts and seeds (whole nuts are not recommended for children under two because of the risk of choking. Older children still need supervision) 	2	2	2
Milk & Milk Products or Soy Products One serving = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup cows milk or soy milk • 1 x 150g pottle yoghurt • 100g cottage cheese 	3-4	3-4	3-4
Fruit and Vegetables. One serving= <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 potato or similar size root vegetable • ½ cup raw or cooked non-starchy vegetables • 1 piece of medium-sized fruit • a handful of grapes or berry fruit • a slice of pineapple or pawpaw or ½ cup fruit salad • 1 cup fruit juice 	4 or more	4 or more	5 or more
Bread and Cereals: Wholegrain bread, cereals, rice, pasta. One serving= <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 medium slice of bread • 1 small bread roll or muffin • ¼ Lebanese round or pita bread • 2 crispbreads or cracker biscuits or 1 crumpet • ½ cup porridge • ¾ cup ready-to-eat breakfast cereal • ¼ cup muesli • ½ cup cooked rice, pasta or noodles 	3	4	5-6

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Vegetarian Resources

- **Vegetarian Cookbooks**

Family-based kiwi meals can be found in: -

- ☉ Alison Holst's Meals Without Meat by Simon & Alison Holst
- ☉ Best of Vegetarian: Month-by-Month Recipes and Healthy Fast Food by Sanitarium.

For the more adventurous cook: -

- ☉ Moosewood Cookbook and The Enchanted Broccoli Forest by Molli Kantz and
- ☉ The Cranks Cookbook offers some great ideas.

- Nutrition Education Service, Sanitarium Health Company, Private Bag 9212, Auckland. Sanitarium produces a range of vegetarian information sheets and cookbooks.
- Piko Wholefoods
cnr Kilmore and Barbadoes Street, CHRISTCHURCH.
Ph 03-366 8116. This store stocks a wide range of organic vegetarian products.
- Vegetarian & Vegan Society phone 04-479 3712
- Check out your local community college/Polytechnic for vegetarian cooking class

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