



March 2006

EATING THE VEGETARIAN WAY

All children need a variety of foods to ensure good nutrition for health and growth. A vegetarian diet avoiding meat, chicken and fish can be nutritionally adequate if foods are chosen carefully.

ENERGY

1. Vegetarian meals are often high in fibre. This means children can feel full before they've eaten enough energy (kilojoules or calories) for growth.
2. Choose energy dense foods like dairy foods, dried fruit, nuts**, peanut butter, seeds, avocado and meat substitutes like eggs, nutmeat and soy burgers.

PROTEIN

1. An adequate protein intake is not difficult to achieve as long as enough energy is consumed.
2. Milk, yoghurt, cheese and eggs are all excellent sources of protein.
3. Nuts**, peanut butter, legumes (baked beans, kidney beans, chickpeas, soybeans), soy products, breads, cereals, rice and pasta are all sources of plant proteins. It is important to complement one plant food with another as this ensures the meal is an excellent source of protein.

For example:

Legumes and cereals (pea soup with wholemeal bread or lentil curry with naan bread)

Beans and corn (chilli beans with cornmeal tortillas)

Beans and rice (kidney bean casserole with rice)

Nuts** and wheat (peanut butter sandwich)

Chickpeas and sesame seeds (chickpea and sesame seed stir-fry)

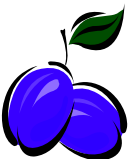
Legumes (e.g.. Baked beans, lentils etc) and vegetables (soy bean and vegetable casserole)

Wholegrain rice and leafy vegetables (spinach risotto)

Cereal and beans (bean salad on a multigrain roll)

CALCIUM

1. Dairy foods should be included for all children. Calcium needs can be met by 3 serves of dairy food each day.
2. Calcium-fortified soy drinks and yoghurt are good sources of calcium. Include at least 3 serves per day.



IRON

1. Fortified breakfast cereals, wholegrain breads, legumes (baked beans, lentils etc) and green leafy vegetables are all good sources of iron.
2. The body can not absorb iron from plant foods as well as it can absorb iron from animal foods so it is better if these foods are eaten at the same meal with foods containing Vitamin C (e.g., citrus fruits, kiwi fruit, fruit juice, tomatoes, capsicum).

OTHER NUTRIENTS THAT MAY BE LIMITED IN VEGETARIAN DIETS

- **Zinc**
Found in eggs, dairy foods, nuts**, peanut butter, whole grains, wheatgerm, soy cheese, tofu and tempeh.
- **Vitamin B12**
Only found in animal foods.
Dairy foods and eggs are good sources.
Plant sources include fortified tofu and soy drinks and Marmite.
A B12 supplement is recommended if dietary intake is inadequate.

SAMPLE MEAL PLAN

- **Breakfast**
Iron-fortified breakfast cereal and milk (e.g.. Weet-Bix)
Toast with butter/margarine and cheese/peanut butter/vegemite
Milk or Fruit juice
- **Morning tea**
Fruit
Dry biscuits and cheese
- **Lunch**
Roll with egg salad/cheese and Vegemite/cheese and salad
- **Afternoon tea**
Tub of yoghurt/glass of milk/fruit smoothie
Fruit or vegetable muffin
- **Dinner**
Tomato and mushroom omelette with fresh salad OR
Pasta with tomato sauce and Parmesan cheese OR
Lentil curry with flat bread (naan) and yoghurt
Milk
Custard or yoghurt with fresh or canned fruit (in natural juice)
- **Supper**
Milk drink
Toasted English muffin, bread or crumpet with jam

**Whole nuts are not suitable for children under 5 years of age due to the risk of choking. Use nut pastes instead.

