



“It is easy to raise happy, healthy children on a veg~n diet. My children have been vegetarian from birth and are thriving teenagers now. I also know of many other vegan and vegetarian boys and girls who are doing incredibly well following a plant-based diet.”

**JULIA, MOTHER OF
NATASHA (15) AND ZOE (13).**

“Appropriately planned vegetarian, including vegan, diets...are appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, adolescence, older adulthood, and for athletes.”

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

The NZ Vegetarian Society has been focused on supporting families since its beginning in 1943. Contact us if you need help.

INFANTS AND CHILDREN **Right from the start**

Eating habits are set in early childhood. A veg~n diet with plenty of variety gives your child the chance to learn to enjoy a wide selection of wonderful, nutritious foods. It provides excellent nutrition for all stages of childhood from birth onwards.

INFANTS

The best food for newborn babies is breast milk. If your baby is not being breastfed there are baby formulas available. Breastmilk or infant formula should be used for the first year. Regular milks are not suitable for babies.

Infants generally do not need any nourishment other than breast milk or formula for the first six months of life. In fact, every breastfed baby is a vegan until they start solids.

5 TO 6 MONTHS

Remember every baby is different and this may be too early for some.

Introduce fruits and vegetables. Try mashed bananas, papaya (pawpaw), avocado, strained peaches, or cooked apples. Vegetables should be thoroughly cooked and puréed. Carrots, green beans, potatoes and peas are all good first choices.

Introduce iron-fortified infant cereal. Try rice cereal first since it is least likely to cause allergies. Mix it with a little breast milk or formula.



9 TO 12 MONTHS

By about nine months, gradually introduce a wide range of foods.

Beans and lentils should be cooked well and mashed, as babies cannot yet digest these whole. Red lentils are quick to cook and can be frozen in small portions to add to vegetable mash. Tofu is excellent and easily digested. Try blending soft tofu with a banana and some olive oil for a high protein, calcium-rich meal. This makes a good dessert for older children, too.

Breastmilk or formula may be replaced by regular milks at 12 months of age, although plant milks should be fortified.

“When my two sons were babies it was my choice for them to be vegetarian. Now they’re four and five, it is without doubt their own choice. They know the law says you may kill and eat certain animals if you choose but neither of my boys has any desire to do so.”

- TRISTAN, MOTHER OF VANCOUVER (5) AND NATE (4)

“We have 3 vegetarian children. All veggie from before birth, now age 22, 8 and 16 years and all still staunch vegetarians with strong ethics and values around respect, dignity for life and peaceful tolerance. Beautiful examples of how the world could be.”

LORRAINE TAYLOR



CHILDREN

Children have a high calorie and nutrient need, but their stomachs are small. Offer your child frequent snacks. Limit juices, as the sugar and acid levels can cause tooth decay. Children can be fussy so persevere with unpopular foods. Given time and multiple exposures (it can take up to ten exposures before they like it), most foods will become acceptable to your children and this will mean a lifetime of a varied healthy diet.

SPECIAL GUIDELINES

- Serving sizes should be appropriate for the child's age and physical needs
- For safety reasons, young children should avoid whole nuts. Try chopping them finely or grinding them in a coffee grinder and adding them to cereals, smoothies, etc
- Young children need some high-fat foods. Use full-fat milks, peanut butter, tahini, avocado, and healthy vegetable oils such as olive and coconut oil
- Encourage children to drink water when thirsty, rather than juice or soft drink
- It doesn't hurt for children to have treats occasionally

QUICK FOODS IDEAS

- smoothies (milk or yoghurt, banana, fresh fruit, and optional ground flaxseed, spirulina, wheat germ)
- muesli bars
- nuts, seeds and raisins or trail mix
- fruit in season
- plain popcorn
- carrot/celery/vegetable sticks with hummus
- yoghurt
- wholegrain sandwiches
- dried fruit, as these contain iron (especially prunes and apricots)
- bean tacos or burritos, nachos using canned chilli beans on corn chips
- baked beans on toast
- crackers
- bliss balls
- cereal

SAMPLE MENU FOR A CHILD WEIGHING 28KG

Approx. recommended protein intake: 28g

BREAKFAST

- 1 cup oatmeal
- 1 T ground flaxseed
- 1 c milk*
- 1 banana

LUNCH

- 1 cup minestrone soup
- 4 rye crackers
- 1 orange or other fruit
- 1 cup milk*
- 2 figs

DINNER

- 1 tortilla
- ¾ cup refined pinto beans
- 1/3 avocado
- ¼ cup chopped tomato, ¼ cup chopped lettuce and 1 T salsa
- 1 cup milk or yoghurt*

SNACKS

- ¼ c raisins or currants
- 1 T tahini, 1 tsp blackstrap molasses on 1 slice toast
- ½ cup papaya
- Water

**milk - you can buy unsweetened plant milks fortified with calcium, vitamin D, and vitamin B12*

NUTRITIONAL ANALYSIS

Calories: 1,754, protein 61g, fat 44g, carbs: 295g, calcium 1336mg, iron 17mg, magnesium 458g, Phosphorous: 1453mg, potassium 4144mg, zinc:10mg, vitamin B1: 1.6mg, vitamin B2: 1.7mg, B3: 12mg, vitamin B5: 4mg, vitamin B6: 1.8mg, folate: 602mcg, vitamin B12: 7.6mcg, vitamin A: 600mcg, vitamin C: 146mg, vitamin E:11mg, omega-6 fatty acids: 16g, omega-3 fatty acids: 3g



Reference for sample menu:

Davis, B. RD and Melina V. MS. RD. (2014). *Becoming Vegan*. Comprehensive Edition. Book Publishing Company, Summertown, US.

There are more leaflets available, check out the resources on our website:
www.vegetarian.org.nz/about-us/resources/

WEBSITES TO CHECK OUT

www.vegetarian.org.nz
www.vrg.org
www.pcrm.org
www.nutritionfacts.org



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