

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. It is important that your child's vegetarian diet meets their energy, protein, calcium, iron, zinc and vitamin B12 requirements.

ENERGY

- Vegetarian meals are often high in fibre. This means children can feel full before they have eaten enough energy for growth.
- Choose energy dense foods like dairy foods, dried fruit, nuts**, peanut butter, seeds, avocado and eggs.

PROTEIN

- To ensure adequate protein intake aim for a protein food source at each meal.
- Milk, yoghurt, cheese and eggs are all excellent sources of protein
- Legumes and pulses, soy products (including tofu and tempeh), quinoa, freekah and nuts** are all good sources of plant proteins. Rice, pasta and bread contain smaller amounts of protein. It is important to combine these protein foods to improve the quality of a vegetarian diet.
- For example:
 - Legumes and cereals (pea soup with wholemeal bread or lentil dahl with rice or chickpea curry with naan or roti bread)
 - Beans and corn/rice (e.g. chilli beans with cornmeal tortillas or rice)
 - Nuts** and bread (peanut butter sandwich)
 - Legumes (e.g. baked beans, lentils etc) and vegetables (soy bean and vegetable casserole)

CALCIUM

- Approximately 3 serves of dairy foods are recommended for children.
- Calcium-fortified soy milk and yoghurt are also good sources of calcium.

IRON

- Fortified breakfast cereals, Milo™, eggs, nuts**, legumes (e.g. baked beans, lentils), quinoa and green leafy vegetables (e.g. spinach) are all good sources of iron.
- Iron from plant foods is not absorbed as well as iron from animal foods. To improve the absorption of iron from plant sources eat these foods with foods containing Vitamin C (e.g. citrus fruits, kiwi fruit, tomatoes, capsicum).

OTHER NUTRIENTS THAT MAY BE LIMITED IN VEGETARIAN DIETS

ZINC

- Found in eggs, dairy foods, nuts**, peanut butter, quinoa, whole grains, soy cheese, tofu and tempeh.

VITAMIN B12

- Dairy foods and eggs are good sources
- Plant sources include fortified tofu and soy drinks and Marmite™/Aussie Mite™
- A B12 supplement is recommended if dietary intake is inadequate.

MEAL IDEAS

Breakfast

- Iron-fortified breakfast cereal and milk (e.g. Weet-Bix™) plus fruit
- Toast with butter/margarine and cheese, peanut butter, Marmite™ or Aussie Mite™
- Eggs on toast

Lunch

- Bread roll or sandwich with egg salad OR cheese and Marmite™/Aussie Mite™ OR cheese and salad

Dinner

- Tomato and mushroom omelette with fresh salad
- Pasta with mixed vegetables in a tomato sauce with cheese
- Lentil curry with flat bread (naan) or rice and yoghurt
- Bean burritos
- Tofu-vegetable stir-fry with rice

Snack ideas

- Fruit – fresh or dried
- Dry biscuits and cheese
- Tub of yoghurt
- Hummus with crackers
- Toasted English muffin, bread or crumpet with grilled cheese, peanut butter OR Marmite™/Aussie Mite™
- Glass of milk OR fruit smoothie

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