

Healthful Choices for Vegetarian Families

Does your family eat vegetarian style sometimes – or all the time? With smart food choices, your child can get all the nutrients he or she needs. You can do it, without much effort.



Let the Food Guide Pyramid guide your food choices. There's lots of variety for vegetarians! The Meat Group has eggs, dry beans, tofu, soy burgers, nuts, peanut butter, and seeds for protein.

Offer meals with enough calories, or food energy. Vegetarian meals with lots of fiber and not much fat may fill your child up. But they may not supply enough food energy for growing, learning, and playing.

Include foods with iron and calcium. These nutrients need special attention from everyone, including vegetarians. Your child needs enough of both to grow properly.

Find sources of vitamin B12 and zinc – if your family avoids all animal products. Growing kids need both! Use food labels to buy foods with vitamin B12 added: some cereals and some soy products. Whole grains, cooked dry beans, tofu, seeds, and nuts have some zinc.

Vegetarian Meals: Good Taste, Easy-to-Make!

Even in a hurry, you can make a vegetarian meal that's healthful and tastes good. **Try these menus!**

Menu 1

Canned vegetable soup with cubed tofu
Whole wheat roll
Apple or banana
Low-fat milk

Menu 2

Toasted cheese sandwich
Cole slaw
Pudding
Orange juice

Menu 3

Spaghetti sauce mixed with canned red beans, over pasta
Tossed green salad
Cut up fruit
Calcium fortified soy beverage

Healthful Choices for Vegetarian Families

For Vegetarians

Use Nutrition Facts on food labels to find these foods.

Foods with Calcium

- Milk*
- Yogurt*
- Cheese*
- Calcium fortified soy beverages are non-dairy choices
- Tofu made with calcium sulfate
- Juice with added calcium
- Breakfast cereal with added calcium
- Cooked dry beans
- Dark-green leafy vegetables (collard, turnip greens)



Foods with Iron

- Cooked dry beans, peas, and lentils
- Whole-grain and enriched breads and cereals
- Cereal with added iron
- Spinach



Vitamin C helps the body use iron. Offer iron-rich foods with vitamin C-rich foods: oranges, berries, some juices, tomatoes, broccoli, green pepper.

* Choose mostly low-fat and fat-free products.

Consider this:

A vitamin and mineral supplement may be a good idea, especially if your family doesn't eat any animal products. Ask your health care professional first.