

Client Name _____ Date _____

RD/DTR _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Vegetarian Nutrition for School-age Children

A vegetarian eating plan can be healthy for children. You may find it useful to meet with a registered dietitian (RD). The RD can help design an eating plan that meets your child's personal nutritional needs.

Here are some general guidelines to make healthy vegetarian choices for your child:

- The eating plan should be mostly fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products or fortified nondairy “milks.”
 - Choose a variety of different colored fruits and vegetables every day.
 - Choose whole grains for at least half of each day's grain servings. Choices include whole wheat, brown rice, barley, oats, bulgur, and cornmeal.
- For protein, choose beans, soy foods, nuts, and nut butters. Your child can also eat eggs if they fit the type of vegetarian diet he or she follows.
- Choose heart-healthy fats, such as olive oil and canola oil.
- Limit foods with added sugar.



Types of Vegetarians

As you discuss nutrition and meal-planning with your child's RD or other health care providers, it can be useful to identify the type of vegetarian your child is.

- **Lacto-ovo-vegetarian:** Does not eat meat, poultry, seafood, or products made from meat, poultry, or seafood (such as gelatin, broths, gravy, and lard).
- **Lacto-vegetarian:** Does not eat meat, poultry, seafood, or products made from meat, poultry, or seafood (such as gelatin, broths, gravy, and lard). Also does not eat eggs or products containing eggs (such as many baked goods).
- **Vegan:** Does not eat meat, poultry, seafood, or products made from meat, poultry, or seafood (such as gelatin, broths, gravy, and lard). Also does not eat eggs, products containing eggs, milk, dairy foods (such as cheese, yogurt, and ice cream), ingredients made from milk (such as whey and casein), or honey.

Recommended Foods

Food Group	Recommended Foods
Milk and Milk Products	Fat-free or low-fat milk* Buttermilk* Evaporated skim milk* Fortified soy milk Nonfat or low-fat yogurt* Powdered milk* Nonfat or low-fat cheese* Low-fat ice cream*
Protein Foods	Dried beans Soy foods Nuts and nut butters Eggs*
Grains	Any Choose whole grains for at least half of your child's grain servings.
Vegetables	All types
Fruits	All types
Fat and Oils	Limit to 2 to 3 teaspoons per day Choose heart-healthy vegetable oils, such as olive or canola oil. Choose low-fat salad dressings and mayonnaise.

Note: Children following a vegan diet will not eat foods marked with an asterisk (*). Children following a lacto vegetarian or a vegan diet will not eat eggs.

Notes:

Sample 1-Day Lacto-Ovo Vegetarian Menu

This menu is designed for a 7-year-old lacto-ovo vegetarian. Ask an RD whether the menu is suitable for your child.

Breakfast	¾ cup low-fat milk ½ slice whole wheat toast ½ teaspoon soft margarine ½ medium banana ¾ ounce fortified ready-to-eat breakfast cereal
Snack	3 tablespoons shelled peanuts ¼ cup raisins
Lunch	½ cup low-fat fruit yogurt Meatless hot dog Hot dog bun ½ cup steamed green beans
Snack	½ whole wheat bagel 1 Tablespoon hummus
Evening Meal	¾ cup low-fat milk ½ cup spaghetti with ½ cup kidney beans and ⅓ cup meatless marinara sauce ½ cup steamed broccoli with 1 teaspoon olive oil ¾ cup sliced strawberries

1,591 kcal; 70 g protein; 233 g carbohydrate; 50 g fat.

Notes:

Sample 1-Day Vegan Menu

This menu is designed for a 7-year-old vegan vegetarian. Ask an RD whether the menu is suitable for your child.

Breakfast	1 cup fortified soy milk ¾ ounce fortified ready-to-eat breakfast cereal ½ slice whole wheat toast ½ teaspoon soft margarine ¾ cup sliced strawberries
Snack	½ cup fortified soy milk 3 tablespoons shelled peanuts ¼ cup raisins
Lunch	1 cup fortified soy milk Sandwich: ½ cup hummus, 1 slice whole wheat bread 1 medium apple 8 carrot sticks
Snack	½ whole wheat bagel 1 teaspoon soft margarine
Evening Meal	½ cup fortified soy milk ½ cup spaghetti with ⅓ cup tofu cubes and ½ cup meatless marinara sauce ½ cup steamed broccoli with 1 teaspoon olive oil Dinner roll 1 teaspoon soft margarine

1,672 kcal; 69 g protein; 225 g carbohydrate; 65.5 g fat.

Notes:

Tips for Parents of School-age Vegetarians

- A vegetarian diet can be a very healthy way for children to eat. Be sure to include plenty of whole grains, cooked beans, fruits, and vegetables. Soy foods are good sources of protein, vitamins, and minerals.
- Milk and dairy foods are good sources of vitamin B-12, calcium, and vitamin D. If your child does not drink milk or eat dairy foods, take care that they are getting enough of these nutrients.
 - Vitamin B-12 is added to some foods. You may find it in soy milk, breakfast cereal, some veggie burgers, and some brands of nutritional yeast. Children’s vitamins may also have vitamin B-12.
 - Calcium is found in some green vegetables, such as kale and broccoli. It is also added to many brands of soy milk and orange juice.
 - Vitamin D is added to some brands of soy milk and fruit juice. Vitamin D supplements not made from animal products are also available.
- School lunch programs may offer limited options for vegetarians. Many families pack a lunch for their child. Sandwich ideas include nut butter and fruit or jelly; vegetarian luncheon “meats”; hummus; bean burgers; tofu burgers; and cheese.
- Some children don't like being seen as different from other kids. If that’s true for your child, packing a meatless bologna sandwich or tofu salad (instead of egg salad) will help make the contents of his or her lunchbox more like the foods other kids are eating.
- Other children like being trendsetters. They might enjoy corn chips with refried bean dip, bagels and hummus, and pasta salad.
- Share the food your family eats with others. Invite your child's friends for snacks or meals. Bring healthful, good-tasting food to school for everyone to try.
- Some families decide to make a change to a vegetarian diet when their children are young. Children may be more accepting of this change if an age-appropriate explanation is given, familiar foods are used, and new foods are introduced gradually. Pasta, bean burritos, and peanut butter sandwiches may be “old friends.” Over time, invite your child to try new vegetarian choices.