

vegan
nutrition
guide
for
children



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the food pyramid



Your child's diet should be varied and balanced. Aim to eat according to the proportions of the food pyramid above:

- * mostly whole grains and legumes
- * a good amount of vegetables & fruit
- * small amounts of healthy fats.

Don't forget a daily dose of vitamins B12 & D and omega-3 essential fatty acids!

recommended daily intakes

	RDI (1-3yrs)	RDI (4-8yrs)	Rich sources
Vitamin A (beta-carotene)	2500 IU	5000 IU	Carrots, apricots, mango, tomato.
Vitamin B1 (thiamin)	0.5 mg	0.6 mg	Nuts, seeds, wheat, peas, asparagus
Vitamin B2 (riboflavin)	0.5 mg	0.6 mg	Almonds, mushrooms
Vitamin B3 (niacin)	6 mg	8 mg	Peanuts, mushrooms
Vitamin B5 (pantothenic acid)	2 mg	3 mg	Mushrooms, avocado, sunflower seeds
Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine)	0.5 mg	0.6 mg	Sunflower seeds, pistachios, prunes
Vitamin B9 (folate)	150 µg	200 µg	Beans, lentils, spinach
Vitamin B7 (biotin)	8 µg	12 µg	Nuts, beans, whole grains, cauliflower
Vitamin B12	3 µg	6 µg	Supplement
Vitamin C	40 mg	60 mg	Broccoli, oranges
Vitamin D	400 IU	400 IU	Sunshine, supplement
Vitamin E	9 IU	10.4 IU	Tofu, spinach, nuts
Vitamin K	55 µg	80 µg	Herbs, leafy greens

recommended daily intakes

	RDI (1-3yrs)	RDI (4-8yrs)	Rich sources
Calcium	700mg	1000mg	Kale, beans, tahini, almonds
Copper	1 mg	2 mg	Kale, mushrooms, seeds, nuts
Iodine	90 µg	90 µg	Seaweed, iodized salt
Iron	7 mg	10 mg	Beans, spinach, lentils, chickpeas
Magnesium	80 mg	130 mg	Spinach, nuts, seeds, brown rice
Manganese	1.2 mg	1.5 mg	Hazelnuts, pumpkin seeds, wheat, beans
Phosphorus	800 mg	1000 mg	Seeds, brazil nuts, beans, lentils
Potassium	3000 mg	3500 mg	Beans, leafy greens, potatoes, avocado
Selenium	20 µg	30 µg	Brazil nuts, grains, sunflower seeds
Zinc	3 mg	5 mg	Spinach, cashews, cocoa, beans

how much should my child eat?

Your child should aim to consume around 1000 - 1800 calories every day, depending on age and activity level. As children's stomachs are small, and vegan diets are often low in calories, this can be difficult to achieve – however, not impossible! Ensure you feed your child a few servings of good fats each day, in the form of avocados, nuts, seeds, and coconut. Your child needs a healthy amount of fats for proper development, so do not adopt a low fat vegan diet for your children.

Also encourage your child to eat more frequently – don't stick to 3 meals a day. Try eating 5-6 smaller meals throughout the day (yes, morning tea and afternoon snacks are meals now! And don't forget dessert too!).

what if my child doesn't like vegetables?

Many children go through stages of fussiness when it comes to eating vegetables, even if you are the perfect role model and consistently eat platefuls of leafy greens and guzzle green smoothies. It can take many times of offering your children a certain vegetable before they will taste it (and even more offerings until they decide they appreciate the taste enough to eat it willingly!). But persistence pays off. Don't skimp on the vegetables from your child's plate because you know they won't eat them, as your child will expect they don't need to eat those vegetables – consistently offer vegetables to your child so they understand they are expected to eat them.

Another proven way to increase your child's vegetable intake is to hide the vegetables. Green smoothies are a tasty way to sneak leafy green vegetables into your child's diet. You can also blend vegetables into sauces to use in pasta dishes, on sandwiches, pizza, or any other recipe that calls for sauce. Presenting vegetables in a variety of ways can also increase the chance that your child will taste (and enjoy) that particular vegetable. For example, your child might not find a kale salad appealing, but they might eat kale chips by the bunch! So try preparing vegetables in a variety of ways: raw, steamed, baked, grated, cut into different shapes (half-moons, julienne strips, etc.). Try serving vegetables as a side dish, as well as incorporating vegetables into the main dish. Eventually you are bound to find at least one way that your child will actually eat the vegetable – take note, and repeat!

Could my child have a nutrient deficiency?

There is plenty of negative media stating that vegan diets are bad, particularly for children. But vegan diets are not new, fad diets. Vegans and strict vegetarians have existed for thousands of years, at least dating back to early Buddhists, Taoists and Hindus.

The problem with modern vegans is that we are surrounded by convenience foods which are often void of many essential nutrients. It is important that you fill your child up with as many whole foods as possible, rather than convenience food with little nutritional content (for example, pasta, bread, biscuits and other baked goods made with white flour).

If you are worried that your child doesn't consume enough iron, calcium, zinc, protein, or other important nutrient, the best way to confirm is to have your child's blood tested.

Note that B12 levels may not be accurately reflected in blood tests – instead, ask your doctor for a B12 urine test (also known as a Methylmalonic Acid test).

Should my child take supplements?

The ONE vitamin supplement that I believe is **ESSENTIAL** for all vegans is vitamin B12.

Currently, research indicates that a reliable source of vitamin B12 is only found in animal products (or synthetically made in a laboratory for use in vegan supplements).

Vitamin B12 is essential for humans, and the repercussions of vitamin B12 deficiency can be devastating and irreversible, particularly for young children – deficiencies can cause nerve damage, memory loss, anaemia, and much more.

While it has been claimed that foods such as tempeh, mushrooms, comfrey, aloe vera and spirulina contain vitamin B12, it has been found that they actually contain a B12 analogue, which mimics vitamin B12 in the body (and can give an inaccurate vitamin B12 blood test result) but do not provide the benefits of vitamin B12 in the body, and can actually interfere with the absorption of vitamin B12.

Supplements, cont.

If you have your child's blood tested to check for vitamin deficiencies, you should act on your doctor's advice as to which supplements your child needs (or make necessary dietary changes to ensure these deficiencies are corrected).

A common vitamin deficiency in vegan children is vitamin D – most children can convert sunlight to vitamin D with regular exposure to the sun (a few minutes each day is easily attainable). However some bodies are unable to make this conversion and vitamin D supplementation is vital. Vitamin D₂ is plant-derived, but is not as easily absorbed into the body. Vitamin D₃ is the most common form of vitamin D supplement, but it is almost always derived from animal sources (such as lanolin).

Another “supplement” to be aware of is omega-3 essential fatty acids. This is a complex issue, but in a nutshell, you should ensure your child has a rich source of omega-3's included in their daily diet. Ground chia seeds or flax seeds are good choices, as are hemp seeds, walnuts, and cold-pressed oils of these seeds/nuts.

Meal Inspiration

Breakfast:

Oatmeal with fruit and blackstrap molasses
Wholemeal toast with nut butter and banana slices, hommus, baked beans, avocado
Vegan protein pancakes
Chia pudding
Fruit salad with granola and coconut yoghurt
Scrambled tofu

Dinner:

Mashed potato, peas, broccoli, and homemade vegan sausages or nuggets
Homemade pizza on whole-wheat crust
Vegetable skewers
Lentil stew on mashed sweet potatoes
Roast vegetables and lentil loaf
Chilli and cornbread
Soup with homemade whole-wheat crusty bread
Nachos with beans, salsa, guacamole and nut cheese

Lunch:

Lentil soup
Brown rice with avocado, tomato and parsley
Baked beans with wholemeal toast and tahini
Vegan mac and cheese with a pureed vegetable sauce
Avocado and hummus quesadillas
Salad wraps with chickpea nuggets or falafels

Snacks:

Green smoothies (combine 1 handful leafy greens, 2 pieces of fruit, 1 cup of liquid and a superfood)
Kale chips
Handful of nuts or dried fruit
Chopped fruit with nut butter
Fruit & nut bliss balls
Popcorn
Black bean brownies