

Vegetarian and Vegan Diets for Toddlers: What Parents Need to Know



Highlights

Toddlers eating a vegetarian or vegan diet need one that's well balanced with plenty of calories.

Breastmilk or formula are important sources of nutrition in the first 12 months.

Toddlers grow and develop quickly, and they need frequent healthy meals and snacks.

Toddlers can be picky with eating, which can add to the challenge of offering certain diets.

Toddlers on a vegan diet often need fortified foods and/or supplements.

In This Article

What Is a Vegetarian Diet?

What Is a Vegan Diet?

Can Toddlers Have a Vegetarian Diet?

Risks of a Vegetarian Diet

Challenges of a Vegetarian Diet

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Challenges of a Vegan Diet

Do Toddlers Need Supplements?
Supporting Good Nutrition
Food Suggestions for Vegan Toddlers
Tools and Assistance

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Food Suggestions for Vegan Toddlers

tofu, tempeh, or other soy products
nut spreads on toast, bread, or crackers
avocado \(\(alone or mixed with fruits or yogurt alternatives\)\)
iron-fortified, high-quality cereals \(\(preferably wholegrain\)\)
meat substitutes such as lentils, soy burgers, nutmeat, or similar products
\(\(check salt and saturated fat levels\)\)
quinoa and other grains
healthy fats, such as those in extra virgin olive oil

Tools And Assistance

Consult healthcare professionals who specialize in child nutrition.

Consider meeting with a registered dietitian experienced in plant-based diets for children to create a balanced meal plan.

Use nutrition-tracking apps to monitor intake of key nutrients such as iron, calcium, vitamin B12, and protein.

Join parenting groups or online communities focused on vegetarian and vegan families for meal ideas and practical tips.

Discuss dietary needs with childcare providers or kindergartens to ensure meals are appropriate.

Keep a food diary to track preferences, intolerances, and reactions, which may be helpful during consultations with specialists.