

FIRST FOODS FOR THE BREASTFEEDING BABY **Plus extra information for the VEGETARIAN FAMILY**

For about the first 6 months, breastmilk offers all that a child needs nutritionally. Around 6 months other foods should be slowly introduced.

A suggested course of introduction is:

- ♥ First 6 months: Breast milk
- ♥ Around 6 months: cereals, including some iron-fortified ones
- ♥ 6-8 months: fruits and vegetables
- ♥ 7-10 months: protein foods (soy, legumes)
- ♥ 12+ months: wheat, dairy, nut butters, egg white

If there is a history of allergies in the family (hayfever, eczema, asthma, food allergies) exclude wheat and dairy for as long as possible, and avoid other allergens such as soy, corn, citrus, and egg. Although not always the case, early introduction may lead to food sensitivities.

If growth is consistent, according to your physician, then quantity of food consumed is not as important as quality - make every bite count! Be aware that vegetarian children are generally lighter than their omnivorous counterparts.

Try to limit high fibre foods and be sure to include high calorie ones (i.e. bran muffin vs avocado).

Before giving your infant any nutritional supplements (such as vitamin D or iron), speak with a qualified professional regarding their appropriateness and dosage.

GROW FOODS for Babies Under 12 Months:

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|------------------|---------------------|
| tofu | mango |
| avocados | apricots |
| quinoa | pumpkin |
| millet | chickpeas |
| lentils | coconut milk |
| avocados | brown rice |
| soy/dairy yogurt | spinach |
| egg yolk | collards/kale |
| flax meal | soaked dried fruits |
| sweet potatoes | blackstrap molasses |
| oatmeal | prune juice |
| cantaloupe | kidney beans |

Children and a Vegetarian Diet

Vegetarian

Excludes animal flesh from diet

Vegan

Excludes all animal products, including dairy, eggs, and honey

The main reasons for following a vegetarian diet are:

- ♥ Ethical
- ♥ Health
- ♥ Environment
- ♥ Religious
- ♥ Economic

In general, studies support vegetarian diets for children - if proper food choices are made. Studies that have indicated that it is a dangerous choice have commonly focused on a sub-population that had fed their children a dangerously low calorie diet (namely macrobiotic).

The Biggest Mistakes Vegetarians can Make:

- ♥ Simply excluding meat from their diet
- ♥ Relying on carbohydrate foods such as pasta and bread to make up the bulk of their diet
- ♥ Becoming overly dependent on high-fat dairy and eggs for protein
- ♥ Eating refined grains, sugar, margarine, and other non-foods too regularly
- ♥ Eating too much fibre

Breastfeeding the Vegetarian Child

- ♥ After the period of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months, breastmilk continues to be an important element of a vegetarian baby's diet .
- ♥ Breastfeeding is recommended for the first two years of life, especially for vegan children. Soy, dairy, and other milks - even when fortified - are not suitable substitutions for infants, but may be introduced after the age of one, as a complement to breastfeeding.
- ♥ It has been found that vegetarian mothers have lower pesticide residues in their milk.

IMPORTANT NUTRIENTS FOR CHILDREN

Calcium

- ♥ Growing children need the materials to build a body! Be sure to include many calcium rich foods particularly if dairy is excluded from your child's diet. For older babies fortified nondairy products are a useful addition.

Iron

- ♥ For most babies, iron stores decrease at around 6 months. Breastmilk has a low iron content, but is considered to be highly absorbable and well utilized. After 6 months it is generally recommended that some supplementation be provided, as iron is so crucial in infant development. Vitamin C foods greatly enhance iron absorption. If possible include one with each meal.

Protein

- ♥ A diet rich in variety often provides enough protein, but because it is so vital to children, it is a good idea to provide concentrated protein sources. Plant proteins need to be combined to resemble the protein profile our bodies need. A varied diet does this naturally, but it is helpful to learn what makes up a vegetarian "protein combination" to be sure that your child gets this in a 24 hour period. Sample combinations would be peas and pasta or tofu and rice. If breastmilk, dairy, or egg is included in the diet, then protein combining is usually not important. These foods are considered "complete" proteins.

Vitamin B12

- ♥ B12 can only be found in animal foods, and if these are completely excluded from the diet then supplementation is crucial. Foods such as fortified meat analogues and fortified milk substitutes provide B12. Breastmilk can be an excellent source of B12 for children, so the nursing mother should be sure to get the required amounts in her diet.

Vitamin D

- ♥ Vitamin D is usually not a worry when your child is exposed to some sunshine. Alternately, fortified foods or supplementation is required to meet your child's needs.

Fats

- ♥ Infants and toddlers require fat for proper development. Breastmilk is rich in essential fatty acids, formula is not. Fatty acids from the mother's diet are found in her breastmilk, so include plenty of essential fatty acid rich foods in your diet. Include an oil such as flax seed oil in your child's diet for insurance if there are no other sources being consumed regularly.

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