Healthy Eating Advisory Service

# Food and drink ideas Four steps to a healthy vegetarian meal

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Early Childhood Services



# Food and drink ideas Four steps to a healthy vegetarian meal



Outside School Hours Care

Healthy Eating Advisory Service

Menu planning guidelines for long day care recommend that vegetarian meals are provided at least once per fortnight for variety. But, vegetarian meals shouldn't just be meals without meat!

Healthy vegetarian meals include a high protein food, a food with iron and a fruit or vegetable high in vitamin C.

Balanced vegetarian meals are suitable for all children (not just vegetarian children) and can promote food variety.

Follow these four steps to create healthy and balanced vegetarian meals that provide children with the protein and iron they need, that is otherwise provided by meat, poultry or fish.



# Step 1: Start with a high protein vegetarian food

Some examples of high protein vegetarian foods are:

- Legumes ie, dried or canned kidney beans, chickpeas, lentils, baked beans
- Tofu
- Eggs
- Milk
- YoghurtCheese
- Textured Vegetable Protein
- Nuts



## Step 2: Include a food with iron

Legumes, tofu and eggs (above) are also sources of iron.

Other sources of iron are:

- Spinach
- Peas
- Kale

These are also high in vitamin C!







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#### Step 3: Include a fruit or vegetable high in vitamin C

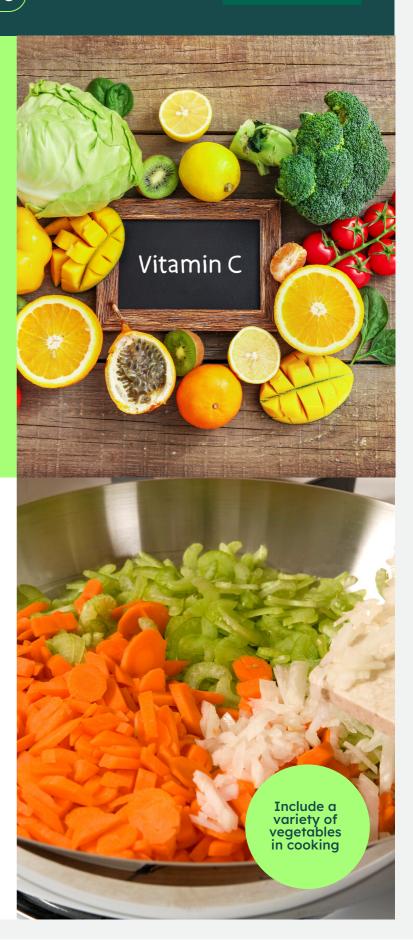
Vitamin C helps the body absorb iron from the meal. Some examples of fruit and vegetables high in vitamin C include:

- Capsicum
- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Cauliflower
- Peas
- Pumpkin
- Frozen mixed vegetables
- Potato
- Spinach
- Zucchini
- Raw tomato
- Berries (strawberries, raspberries, blackberries)
- Kiwifruit
- Cantaloupe
- Orange/Mandarin Sweet potato
- Pineapple

#### Step 4: Include a variety of other vegetables

Add colour to your plate by adding a variety of vegetables such as:

- Carrot
- Pumpkin
- Lettuce
- Celery
- Canned tomatoes
- Corn
- Zucchini
- Eggplant
- Onions
- Cucumber
- Mushrooms



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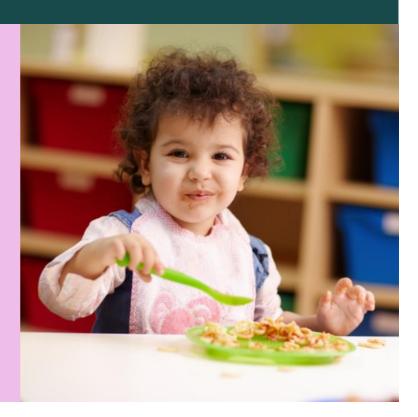
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To make a healthy vegetarian meal, use generous amounts of foods containing protein iron, and vitamin C, and then add a variety of other vegetables.

Balance these meal ideas with suitable snacks to ensure that the daily menu offers enough food from each of the food groups each day (see Menu planning guidelines for long day care for more information).



Here are some ideas for healthy, balanced and delicious vegetarian meals that kids will love:

| Meal*   | 1. Protein food                | 2. Iron food                   | 3. Vitamin C food           | 4. Other vegetables              |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Pea and potato frittata with wholemeal pita<br>bread              | Egg and cheese                 | Peas                           | Peas and potato             | Lettuce and tomato               |
| Vegetable stir fry with egg and tofu with noodles                 | Egg and tofu                   | Tofu                           | Broccoli, capsicum, cabbage | Corn, onion                      |
| Sweet potato and chickpea patties with Turkish bread              | Chickpeas                      | Chickpeas                      | Sweet potato                | Lettuce, tomato, avocado         |
| <u>Vegetarian lentil bolognese</u>                                | Lentils                        | Lentils                        | Zucchini                    | Canned tomato, celery, carrot    |
| Stripy egg slice with wholemeal bread                             | Egg                            | Egg                            | Zucchini                    | Onion, grated carrot             |
| Egg and baked bean bread cups with lettuce and tomato salad       | Egg, baked beans               | Eggs, baked beans              | Tomato                      | Lettuce                          |
| Falafel balls with tzatziki dip, Greek salad and<br>Turkish bread | Chickpeas, egg                 | Chickpeas, egg                 | Raw tomato                  | Lettuce, cucumber                |
| <u>Vegetarian chilli con carne</u>                                | Chickpeas and red kidney beans | Chickpeas and red kidney beans | Capsicum                    | Onion, carrot, celery,<br>tomato |
| Lentil dahl with rice and yoghurt                                 | Lentils, yoghurt               | Lentils, spinach               | Sweet potato                | Onion                            |
| Minestrone soup   | A mix of legumes               | A mix of legumes               | Zucchini                    | Carrot                           |
| Vegetable frittata  | Egg                            | Egg                            | Mixed vegetables            | Onion                            |
| <u>Vegetarian fried rice</u>                                      | Tofu and egg                   | Tofu and egg                   | Peas, capsicum              | Corn, carrot, onion              |
| <u>Vegetarian lasagne</u>   | Lentils, ricotta cheese        | Lentils                        | Capsicum                    | Mushrooms                        |
| Vegetable hotpot with couscous                                    | Chickpeas                      | Chickpeas                      | Zucchini, cauliflower       | Onion, carrot, canned tomato     |





<u>Vegetarian lentil</u> <u>bolognese</u>\*

\*Recipe available from the Healthy Eating Advisory Service



### **Important tips**

Many vegetarian recipes offer less than one serve of meat alternative per child. If there are vegetarian recipes on your menu that do not provide each child with a full serve of meat alternative, you must include additional meat alternatives as a side dish or as a snack at another time during the day.

#### Try:

- hard boiled or scrambled eggs
- hummus (with veggie sticks and crackers)
- falafel balls
- · baked beans on toast
- egg sandwiches
- four bean salad (as a side dish)
- egg salad (as a side dish)
- fruity bread pudding
- egg and baked bean bread cups