



Early childhood services

Food and drink ideas

Four steps to a healthy
vegetarian meal



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.

→ 01 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
- Yoghurt
- Cheese
- Textured Vegetable Protein
- Nuts



→ 02 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!



→ 03 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



→ 04 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





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*	Protein food	Iron food	Vitamin C food	Other vegetables
Pea and potato frittata with wholemeal pita 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
Vegetarian lentil bolognese	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

Meal*	Protein food	Iron food	Vitamin C food	Other vegetables
<u>Falafel balls with tzatziki dip, Greek salad and Turkish bread</u>	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, tomato
Lentil dahl with rice and yoghurt	Lentils, yoghurt	Lentils, spinach	Sweet potato	Onion
<u>Minestrone soup</u>	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
<u>Vegetable hotpot with couscous</u>	Chickpeas	Chickpeas	Zucchini, cauliflower	Onion, carrot, canned tomato

*Recipes available from the Healthy Eating Advisory Website



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

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