

# OPTIMUM NUTRITION FOR RAISING A CHILD ON A VEGAN DIET

## CHECKLIST: AGE 12 MONTHS TO 3 YEARS

Evidence-based advice from Amanda Benham, vegan paediatric dietitian with over 25 years experience

### FROM AGE 12 MONTHS:



\*By now most children should be in a routine with eating 3 meals per day and be included in family meal times. Keep offering a range of foods from the plant food groups every day: Grains (e.g. oats, weat bix, rice, pasta, bread), Legumes & Soy Products (e.g. tofu, tempeh, lentils, chick peas, beans), Green Vegetables, Other Colourful Vegetables, Fresh Fruit, Nut & Seed Pastes and Calcium-Fortified Full Fat Soymilk.

\*Keep offering iron-rich foods (eg legumes, soy products, green vegetables) with a source of vitamin C at every meal (eg fruit with breakfast and add raw tomato, capsicum, lemon juice or lime juice to meals. Use **iodised** salt.

\* Once your child becomes more active, start offering a nutritious snack between meals. Good snack choices include bread, crackers, or thin vegetable sticks (once your child can bite and chew them safely) with hommus or nut butter, plain soy yoghurt, fresh fruit (in moderation). Avoid giving snack foods that are high in fat, sugar or salt.

\*Give a full fat calcium-fortified soy milk in a baby cup (not a bottle). e.g. give with the morning and afternoon snack, aiming for about 1-1.5 cups per day in total. Keep also offering water in a cup between meals.

\* If previously giving infant formula, it can be ceased at 12 months, and baby bottles should no longer used. The number of breastfeeds per day can decrease, with food being offered before breastmilk at meal and snack times.

\*Continue to supplement your toddler daily with vitamin B12 (5+ mcg per day), DHA (100 mg per day) and vitamin D (600-1500 IU per day, especially on days when your child is not getting sun on bare arms or legs)<sup>1</sup>. Give 2 serves of omega-3 rich foods per day, where one serve = 1 tsp flaxseed oil, 3 tsp ground flaxseeds or 4 tsp chia seeds<sup>1</sup>.

\*Suggested meal pattern for your toddler's meals (which is also suitable for family meals, although most adults do not need to make a point of including high fat foods): Breakfast: Cereal + fruit + fortified soymilk + flax or chia seeds; Lunch: Grain (or potato) + legume/ tofu/tempeh + green vegetable + other colourful vegetable + vitamin C source +/- high fat food (tahini, nut butter or avocado). Dinner: Same pattern as lunch. Offer an am and a pm snack.

\*Continue to have your child's growth and development monitored by a child health nurse or doctor.

### Tips to prevent "fussy eating":

\* Keep offering a wide variety of healthy meals and snacks to your child, including foods that have been refused previously. (It can take 10 or more offerings before a child will eat a food.). If your child refuses to eat at mealtime, don't stress or make a fuss. Just put their meal aside for them to have later when they are hungrier rather than offering an alternative meal. This helps them learn to eat family meals rather than expect something different.

\*Remember that it is not the parents' job to "get food into" the child, but simply to offer it. Practise the ESI Division of Responsibility in Feeding<sup>2</sup>, which states that the caregivers' role (not the child's) is to decide **what** food is offered, **where** it is offered and **when** it is offered. It is the child's job is to decide whether they will eat, and how much. Young children will not starve themselves, but if they know they will be offered a preferred food if they refuse a meal, they will make use of this information. Offer your child 3 meals and 2 snacks per day, and do not let them "graze", as this will make them less likely to eat their meals. Allow them unlimited access to only water at other times.

\*Encourage your child to eat and try new foods but never try to coerce them. Do not talk about their food likes and dislikes with them or in front of them. It is not the parents' job to find out what the child likes to eat; it is to help the child learn to enjoy a wide range healthy foods. Model good eating habits and make mealtimes pleasant.

- KEY REFERENCES:** 1. Baroni L, Goggi S, Battaglini R, Berveglieri M, Fasan I, Filippin D, et al. Vegan Nutrition for Mothers and Children: Practical Tools for Healthcare Providers. *Nutrients*. 2018;11(1):5. <https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/11/1/5/htm> , accessed 1/1/19.
2. Satter E. Elyn Satter's Division of Responsibility in Feeding. 2016 <https://www.elynsatterinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/handout-dor-tasks-cap-2016.pdf> , accessed 1/1/19. (a useful resource for parents)

This information is not intended to replace individualised dietary or medical advice. If you want help with nutrition and dietary planning, see an Accredited Practising Dietitian experienced in plant-based nutrition. If you have health issues or concerns, see your doctor. © 2019 Amanda Benham, APD, AN, FASLM [www.humanherbivore.com](http://www.humanherbivore.com)