

VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN DIETS & THE CACFP

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Vegans – exclude red meat, poultry, fish, eggs and dairy products. Obtain protein from beans, legumes, nuts and soy products like tofu and tempeh.

ADEQUATE NUTRITION

To make sure a child gets enough of all the nutrients needed for his or her growing body, a vegetarian diet should include:

- High-quality protein sources such as nuts, eggs, legumes, tofu and tempeh
- Energy (calories) for growth and development
- Iron to prevent anemia
- Vitamin B12, Vitamin D and calcium to prevent bone disease
- Healthy fats from non-meat sources
- Food in the correct form and combination to make sure nutrients can be digested and absorbed
- Breastmilk or formula will remain an important food for infants until 12 months. Talk to a registered dietitian or pediatrician about the introduction of solids.

PROTEIN OPTIONS:

- Legumes
- Tofu
- Tempeh
- Lentils
- Chickpeas
- Hummus
- Red kidney beans
- Butter beans
- Cannellini beans
- Borlotti beans
- Three bean mix
- Nuts
- Nut butters



TIPS FOR A CHILD'S VEGETARIAN DIET

It is important to understand what foods need to be substituted in the diet as energy, protein and vitamin sources may need to be 'topped up'. Encourage a child to eat a wide variety of foods. Alternate whole grain-rich and refined cereal products. Combine lower energy vegetarian foods, such as vegetables, with higher fat foods: for example, vegetable fritters. Increase the energy value of food by the use of nut butters, avocado, dairy products and oils. Offer children regular meals and snacks.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

A vegetarian or vegan diet **does not require** special documentation.

Soy milk and Ripple (pea protein) milk can be given in place of cow's milk with just **written permission or request from parents**.

However, **almond, oat and coconut milk do require a Special Diet**

Statement form that must include the medical condition (ex: lactose intolerance or dairy allergy). The statement or form must be signed by a Medical Doctor (MD), Nurse Practitioner (NP) or Physician Assistant (PA).

The medical statement or "Special Diet Statement to Request Dietary Accommodations" form once completed should be submitted to the Providers Choice office for approval.

The form is titled "Special Diet Statement to Request Dietary Accommodations". It asks for the name and date of birth of the child participant. It also asks for the names and contact information of the parent/guardian and child care provider. A section for "Participant Medical Information" asks for a medical condition, disability, physical or mental impairment or food allergies that may affect the child's health or safety. It also asks for the child's major life activity (such as eating) or bodily function that is affected by the medical condition. A "Dietary Accommodation" section asks for the type of dietary restriction (e.g., vegetarian, vegan, low-sodium) and specifies foods to be omitted and recommended substitutes. It also asks for texture modifications like puree or liquid. A "Signature" section requires a licensed physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner to sign and retain a copy of the form. The form is dated April 2017.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

• CAN A VEGAN OR VEGETARIAN DIET PROVIDE ALL THE NUTRIENTS MY CHILD NEEDS?

Yes, with careful planning a vegetarian or vegan diet can successfully meet a growing child's nutritional needs. Contact the Providers Choice Nutritionist with specific questions or for more individual nutrition guidance.

• WHAT TYPES OF VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN PROTEIN SOURCES ARE CREDITABLE ON THE FOOD PROGRAM?

Many high-quality, plant-based protein sources are CACFP creditable! Newly creditable items include soy products like tofu and tempeh. Legumes, nuts and seeds, dairy products and eggs are also creditable. A list of many other creditable options can be found on the front of this handout.

Additional Tips for Breastfeeding Mothers

- By maintaining a healthful diet, breastmilk alone will be enough until your baby is around six months of age.
- Make sure to eat plenty of the following foods, as they contain important vitamins and minerals:
 - Protein foods such as nuts, eggs, dried beans and lentils, and tofu
 - Dairy products such as cow's milk, cheese and yogurt, or soy products fortified with calcium
 - Cereal and grain foods, including fortified or whole grain cereals and grains
 - A variety of fruits and vegetables, including green leafy vegetables
 - Polyunsaturated or monounsaturated oils found in foods like nuts, seeds, olive oil and salmon
- If you are a strict vegan and are breastfeeding, you may need vitamin or mineral supplements (specifically vitamin B12). Talk to your doctor or dietitian for more guidance.

NOTE:

This handout is for informational purposes only. Always consult your medical provider or the Providers Choice Nutritionist for any questions or concerns about food allergies or medical conditions.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

Contact the Providers Choice office at 800-356-5983

