

# Vegetarian and Vegan Toddlers

With good planning, feeding your toddler a vegetarian or vegan diet can be a healthy choice. Help your child get the nutrition he needs by:

- ✓ breastfeeding for at least 24 months
- ✓ introducing iron-rich foods at about 6 months (see [Introducing Solid Foods](#))
- ✓ giving him 400 IU of liquid vitamin D supplement every day (see [Vitamin and Mineral Supplements](#))
- ✓ offering iron-rich protein foods like eggs (for vegetarians), cooked tofu, soy and veggie “meats,” beans, peas, lentils and nut and seed butters

See [Feeding By Age](#) for more feeding tips.



### DID YOU KNOW

**Until your toddler is 2 years old or older**, continue to offer breastmilk. If he’s under 2 and isn’t breastfed, give him 2 cups (500 ml) of whole (3.25%) milk each day. Limit cow’s milk to no more than 3 cups (750 ml) per day. If your child isn’t breastfed and doesn’t drink cow’s milk, try follow-up soy formula – a good source of healthy fat.

## Nutrients to Pay Special Attention to

If your child doesn’t eat meat or other animal products, he could be missing some key nutrients. Choose alternate foods carefully to ensure he’s getting all the nutrition he needs.

### Omega-3 fats

**Why they’re needed:** for brain development and vision

**Where they’re found:** human milk, store-bought infant formula with DHA and ARA, ground flax, chia, hemp seeds, ground walnuts, omega-3 enriched eggs and soft margarine, flaxseed oil, canola oil, soybeans

### Protein

**Why it’s needed:** to build and repair cells and make enzymes and hormones

**Where it’s found:** human milk, store-bought infant formula (cow’s milk- or soy-based), tofu, lentils, beans, peas, nut butters, soy based “meats,” homogenized whole cow’s milk (3.25%), unsweetened fortified soy beverage (after 24 months), cheese, yogurt



### DID YOU KNOW

**If your child is over 2 years old** and doesn’t drink cow’s milk or vitamin D-fortified goat’s milk, give him unsweetened soy beverage fortified with calcium and vitamin D. Other plant-based beverages – like rice, potato, almond, coconut and hemp drinks – don’t contain enough protein and other nutrients for toddlers.

### Fat

**Why it’s needed:** for energy and brain and nerve function

**Where it’s found:** human milk, store-bought infant formula (cow’s milk- or soy-based), ground nuts and seeds, nut and seed butters, tofu, avocado, milk, vegetable oils, soft margarine

### Vitamin B12

**Why it’s needed:** for healthy nerve and blood cells and to make DNA, the genetic material in cells

**Where it’s found:** eggs, fortified foods like veggie “meats,” Red Star nutritional yeast, store-bought infant formula (cow’s milk- or soy-based), unsweetened fortified soy beverage (after 24 months)

## Iron

**Why it's needed:** for red blood cells, growth and brain development

**Where it's found:** iron-fortified infant cereal, enriched cereals, quinoa, beans, peas, lentils, tofu, blackstrap molasses



### DID YOU KNOW

Iron is best absorbed when eaten with foods high in vitamin C like oranges, grapefruit, kiwi, sweet potato, sweet peppers and broccoli.

## Calcium

**Why it's needed:** to build strong bones and teeth

**Where it's found:** human milk, store-bought infant formula (cow's milk- or soy-based), unsweetened fortified soy beverage (after 24 months), calcium-fortified tofu, cheese, yogurt, baked beans, blackstrap molasses; smaller amounts in almond butter, sesame butter, oranges



### BRAIN BUILDER

If you're vegan, your milk may be low in vitamin B12. Help your toddler get enough of this brain-building nutrient by eating B12-fortified foods or taking a daily supplement.

For more information, talk with a registered dietitian at HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 and see [Canada's food guide](#).

