

The vegetarian balance

Parent fact sheet

The key to healthy eating is to eat a variety of foods from the five food groups. What if you, or your child, chooses to cut out meat, or all animal products?
Can you still have a healthy diet? Yes.

11%

Australians consume
little or no meat

Vegetarian diets are common and increasing. There are a number of reasons why someone chooses to be vegetarian e.g. ethical reasons, religious beliefs, environmental concerns, taste or health. The high cost of meat and other animal products is another consideration.

Whether it is a life-long choice or a short-term experience, it is important to be mindful of replacing the nutrients that animal products often provide.

Teenagers are at a stage where they are thinking more independently. When talking about vegetarian diets it is important to respect their decisions and their reasons for eating and not eating certain food. Focus on trying new vegetarian meals and the importance of nutrition for growth, development and mental health.

Animal products are our best source of several nutrients, including:

- **Protein** - for muscle growth and development
- **Iron and vitamin B12** - needed to make healthy blood
- **Calcium** - for strong bones
- **Zinc** - for a strong immune system
- **Omega-3** - for a healthy heart.

Visit the WASCA website for these great vegetarian recipes and more: waschoolcanteens.org.au

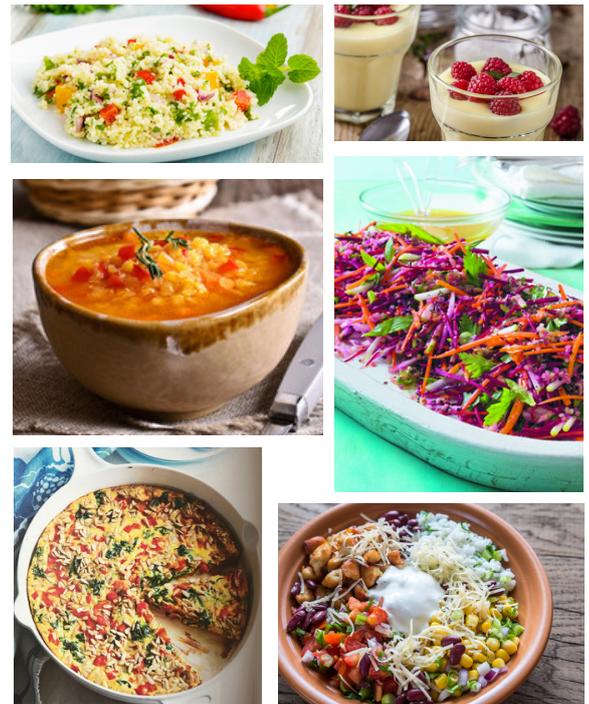
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The Dietitians Association of Australia recommend:

- Eggs, dried beans, lentils, nuts or seeds
- High-fibre breads and cereals
- Dairy foods or calcium enriched soy foods
- Plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Healthy fats like olive oil
- Foods fortified with vitamin B12
- Flaxseed oil, chia seeds, walnuts
- Omega-3 fortified foods e.g. bread.

School canteen balance

Schools must follow the Department of Education's *Healthy Food and Drink* policy. The good news is there are loads of canteen items that vegetarian students will love e.g. sushi, fried rice, salads, stuffed spuds and frittata. Chat to the Canteen Supervisor about increasing the vegetarian range.



For further advice about vegetation eating, or other diet related issues, chat to your GP or an Accredited Practising Dietitian.

Visit Dietitians Association of Australia: <https://daa.asn.au/> or Nutrition Australia: <http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/>