

Healthy vegetarian meals include a high protein food, a food with iron and a fruit or vegetable high in vitamin C.



*Menu planning guidelines for long day care*¹ recommend that vegetarian meals are provided at least once per fortnight for variety. But, vegetarian meals don't have to just be meals without meat!

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.

1 Start with a high protein vegetarian food

Some examples of high protein vegetarian foods are:



Legumes i.e. dried or canned kidney beans, chickpeas, lentils, baked beans



Tofu



Eggs



Milk



Yoghurt



Cheese



Textured Vegetable Protein



Nuts

2 Include a food with iron

Legumes, tofu and eggs (above) are also sources of iron.

Other sources of iron are:



Spinach



Peas



Broccoli

These are also high in vitamin C!

¹ *Menu planning guidelines for long day care*, Healthy Eating Advisory Service, Department of Health and Human Services, State Government of Victoria, 2012, www.heas.health.vic.gov.au



3 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



Green beans



Frozen mixed vegetables



Potato



Spinach



Zucchini



Raw tomato



Berries



Kiwifruit



Cantaloupe



Orange/
Mandarin



Sweet potato



Pineapple



4 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



Healthy vegetarian meal ideas

To make a healthy vegetarian meal, use generous amounts of foods containing protein (1), iron (2) and vitamin C (3), and then add a variety of other vegetables (4).

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*¹ for more information).

Here are some ideas for healthy, balanced and delicious vegetarian meals that kids will love:

Vegetarian meal ideas

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	Broccoli and 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
Falafel balls with tzatziki*, Greek salad and Turkish bread	Chickpeas, egg	Chickpeas, egg	Raw tomato	Lettuce, cucumber
Vegetarian chilli con carne*	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
Minestrone soup*	A mix of legumes	A mix of legumes	Green beans, zucchini	Carrot
Vegetable frittata	Egg	Egg	Mixed vegetables	Onion
Vegetarian fried rice*	Tofu and egg	Tofu and egg	Peas, capsicum	Corn, carrot, onion
Vegetarian lasagne*	Lentils, ricotta cheese	Lentils	Capsicum	Mushrooms
Vegetable hot pot with couscous*	Chickpeas	Chickpeas	Zucchini, cauliflower	Onion, carrot, canned tomato

* Recipes available from the Healthy Eating Advisory Service.



Important

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*

** Recipes available from the Healthy Eating Advisory Service.*

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