

Pediatric vegetarian diets are healthy, nutritionally adequate, and may provide health benefits in the prevention of obesity

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Well-planned vegetarian diets are appropriate for individuals during all stages of the lifecycle, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, and adolescence. Vegetarian diets in perspective: according to a nationwide poll in 2016, approximately 3.3% of American adults are vegetarian or vegan and about 46% of vegetarians are vegans. Plant-based diets are becoming well accepted. The American Institute for Cancer Research encourages a plant-based diet. The 2015-2020 dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend a vegetarian approach for the National School Lunch Program. Pediatric vegetarian diets: There are many reasons for the rising interest in vegetarian diets. Health, economic, ecological, ethical or religious reasons are at the top level. Scientific research continues to document the health advantages of the vegetarian diet with lower risk of heart related diseases, obesity, and cancer. Many are starting their children on a vegetarian lifestyle for the major reason to maintain good health and to prevent diet related diseases. The number of vegetarians in the United States and Canada is expected to increase during the next decade. Food and nutrition professionals can assist vegetarian clients by providing current, accurate information to parents about vegetarian nutrition, diet and resources.