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## Menu Ideas for Vegetarian Teens



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Teens become vegetarians for many different reasons. Regardless of why a teen stops eating some or all animal-based foods, parents play an important role in helping make sure their child gets all the vitamins, minerals and other nutrients necessary for growth and good health.

Vegetarianism can mean avoiding all meats, dairy products, and eggs or eating dairy and eggs but no meat. Some vegetarians even eat small amounts of fish occasionally. Talking with teens about which animal-based foods they do and do not wish to include in their diets, and why, helps parents provide support and ensure their kitchen is stocked with a variety of plant-based offerings.

## *Adapt Recipes*

Look with your teen for recipes that can be adapted for the family. Start with dishes that include vegetables and a whole grain, along with a protein that can be added after cooking, such as, grilled tofu or beans for the vegetarian and grilled chicken breast or ground meat for other family members.

Encourage a vegetarian teen to try new foods and be adventurous. If your teen is hesitant to try new foods, it may be hard to meet their needs for nutrients like protein, iron and calcium. Tofu, kidney and other beans, edamame (soy beans), quinoa, dark leafy greens, fortified soy milk and fortified orange juice are just a few of the many nutrient-rich plant-based options. Remind teens to replace animal-based foods with nutritious foods rather than with empty calories from chips, fries, soft drinks, desserts or candy.

## *Have Your Teen Help*

A vegetarian meal can be a healthy choice for the whole family, so let your teen plan and help create a family meal at least once a week. Work with your teen to create a menu and shopping list, and go shopping together.

If your teen is a lacto-ovo vegetarian (consumes dairy and eggs), here is a sample menu to try.

## *Menu for Teen Vegetarians (Lacto-Ovo Vegetarian)*

Calories: 2,270; Protein: 112g; Carbohydrates: 292; Fat: 72g; Calcium: 1,200mg

### Breakfast

- 1 cup cooked oatmeal
- 1 hard boiled egg
- 1 cup berries
- 8 fluid ounces skim milk
- 8 fluid ounces orange juice

### Lunch

- Peanut butter (2 tablespoons) and jelly sandwich
- 1 cup chopped carrots
- 1 cup navy bean or lentil soup
- 1 ounce string cheese
- 1 ounce pistachios

### Snack

- 8 ounces Greek style yogurt
- ¼ cup granola
- 1 apple
- 1 ounce almonds

#### Dinner

- 4 ounces tofu
- 1 cup stir-fry vegetable mix
- 1 cup brown rice made with canola oil

#### Dessert

- Smoothie made of low-fat milk blended with sliced peaches

Plant-based meals offer an opportunity to introduce family members to new types of dishes and ingredients from around the world. Seek out books and website resources on vegetarian eating and contact a [registered dietitian nutritionist](#) for additional information and assistance.