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Pediatric vegetarian diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate and may provide health benefits in the prevention of certain lifestyle diseases

Pediatric Vegetarian Diets: 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: A vegetarian is a person who eats all plant foods, does not eat meat, including fowl or seafood, or products containing these foods. The eating patterns of vegetarians may vary considerably. There are basically three types of vegetarian diets. 1. The lacto-ovo- vegetarian eating pattern, the most common type is based on grains, vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts, seeds, dairy products and eggs. 2. Lacto-vegetarian Diet includes milk with plant foods but excludes any other foods from animals such as eggs. 3. Total Vegetarian or Plant based Diet is made of grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds, excludes the use of all animal products. Vegan means no animal products excluding the wearing of leather products.

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 five. 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 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.

Biography

Joycelyn M Peterson completed Nutrition and Dietetics degrees at Loma Linda University and Johns Hopkins University (Post-master's studies in international nutrition). She is Professor and chair of Nutrition and Dietetics Department at Oakwood University, Alabama, USA. She recently published her dissertation in the *Annals of Nutrition Metabolism* 8/2011, and is a contributing writer for newspapers and health magazines and has also published two vegetarian cookbooks. Her professional experience includes vegetarian nutrition consultant, public health speaker and program planner for international and state-wide public health nutrition initiatives, conducting research at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

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