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Translated by the clinical nutrition department of the Montreal Children's Hospital, MUHC.

Vegan plate

Source: Illustration courtesy of
the Montreal Diet Dispensary



The essentials

- > Adapt food size and texture according to the child's age to avoid choking.
- > Offer iron-rich foods at least 3 times a day.
- > Offer a daily vitamin D supplement of 400 to 600 IU.

Enriched baby cereals can easily be incorporated into recipes (e.g. pancakes, muffins).



Iron

High needs for small bodies! It's important to supplement your children's diet with iron-rich foods to ensure the best possible growth.

In a vegan diet, iron-rich foods include:

- > Legumes: lentils, beans, chickpeas, etc.
- > Tofu, soy butter, etc.
- > Nuts and seeds
- > Iron-enriched baby cereals
- > Iron-enriched grain products



Vitamin C

To improve iron absorption, be sure to offer a variety of fruits and vegetables with meals.



Calcium

Calcium is necessary for strong, healthy bones and teeth. The best sources are **calcium-enriched dairy substitutes**. Legumes, nuts and some vegetables also contain calcium.

Age-appropriate calcium-rich drinks:

- > Breast milk
- > Commercial plant-based infant formula (e.g. soy)
- > From age 1: fortified soy beverage
- > From age 2: enriched plant-based beverages (soy, oat, rice, almond, etc.)

Other food sources of calcium :

- > Plant-based cheese and yogurt
- > Tofu, edamame
- > Nuts and seeds
- > Various legumes
- > Some vegetables: pak-choi, broccoli, cabbage and kale



Vitamin B₁₂

Vitamin B₁₂ is essential for the development of blood cells and the proper functioning of the nervous system. It is found mainly in foods of animal origin. Vegan children are therefore much more at risk of vitamin B₁₂ deficiency.

Children on a vegan diet get most of their vitamin B₁₂ from the following sources:

- > Breast milk from a mother whose vitamin B₁₂ needs are met¹
- > Plant-based infant formula enriched with vitamin B₁₂ (e.g. soy)
- > Vitamin B₁₂-enriched plant-based beverages
- > B₁₂-enriched nutritional yeast (5 ml per day)
- > If your child gets limited amounts from other sources or if you want to make sure your child meets his or her needs, offer a liquid vitamin B₁₂ supplement (ask your pharmacist)
 - 0-12 months: 0.5 µg per day
 - 1-5 years: 0.9 µg to 1.2 µg per day

1. If the mother is vegan, daily consumption of 700 ml of fortified plant-based beverage OR 15 ml of vitamin B₁₂-enriched nutritional yeast OR a supplement of at least 2.8 µg of B12 is sufficient to meet requirements.

Products enriched with B₁₂ from spirulina, chlorella and nori seaweed contain a different form of vitamin B₁₂ that could adversely affect B₁₂ intakes. It is therefore best to avoid them.

Light and heat can destroy vitamin B₁₂. Be careful not to overheat enriched nutritional yeast or supplements, and to store them properly.



Omega-3

Omega-3s are essential fats for maintaining good health. They are particularly important for brain development.

The main plant sources are:

- > Flax, chia and hemp seeds and oil
- > Walnuts
- > Canola oil
- > Soybeans
- > Oil from some seaweeds

Omega-3s are very sensitive to heat and deteriorate rapidly. Avoid heating them and freeze them to preserve longer.

Useful links

<https://naitreetgrandir.com/en/>

<https://fondationolo.ca/en/>

<https://odnq.org/trouver-une-dietetiste-nutritionniste/>

<https://www.dispensaire.ca/en/>