





Earth911®
More Ideas, Less Waste

 [How to Recycle](#)

 [Where to Recycle](#)

[Food & Beverage](#)

[Living & Well-Being](#)

Reading time: 3 mins

When Your Child Wants to Become a Vegetarian



By [Gemma Alexander](#)

NOV 22, 2021

 [kids, vegetarian](#)



It's almost a rite of passage for many young people to come home from school one day and declare that they want to become a vegetarian. In most households, that announcement is met with eye rolls and a flat rejection. But for environmentalist parents who have not given up meat, the response is much more complicated. You know that a [low-](#)

[Westlake Home - Luxury Organic](#)

[carbon diet](#) is vegetarian and don't want to discourage your child from doing the right thing. But on the other hand, making separate meals is burdensome and inefficient. And can a growing body get enough protein without any meat?

Healthy Kids

As parents, our kids' well-being is our top concern. Fortunately, what's healthy for the planet can be healthy for kids – with a little planning. Many studies show that vegetarian diets are associated with numerous [health benefits](#), but it's true that an adult's high fiber, low-fat diet is not ideal for growing kids. And a vegetarian diet is not automatically healthy; after all, Doritos and soda pop are vegetarian. A healthy diet requires some planning, regardless of its protein sources. But it's especially true for young people and anyone who eschews all animal products. If your child wants to be vegetarian, special care needs to be taken to ensure that their diet includes a [healthy variety](#) of foods that provide enough protein, B12, calcium, and iron. The good news is that it's not very hard to do so.

Encouraging your child's choice now ensures that they can develop healthy vegan or vegetarian eating habits under your supervision. Make sure they know that picky eating and a vegetarian diet are not compatible. A vegetarian child must eat vegetables, beans and tofu, and other foods that you have identified as healthy requirements to replace meat. Too many budding vegetarians are more accurately described as "pastatarians," and a pasta-based diet is not healthy or sustainable at any age.

Which Right Thing?

That still leaves the problem that getting dinner on the table every night is a challenge without having to make separate meals for family members with different dietary preferences. Finding out what motivates your child can help you develop solutions that are both supportive of their developing ethics and your ability to manage your time.

The most common reasons children decide to quit eating meat are:

1. Concern for animals
2. Concern for the planet
3. They don't like the taste of meat

Bedding

Rather than preparing separate meals for your vegetarian child, you might convince your child to amplify their impact by bringing the whole family along on a partial improvement. If animal cruelty is driving your child's choice, consider committing to purchase [humanely-raised](#) animal products.

For children who are concerned about sustainability, there are many ways to help them make a difference. Get them involved in [preventing food waste](#) at home. Encourage them to start or join a [green team](#) to do the same thing at school. Let them help you identify [organic](#) and more sustainable products to [shop your family's values](#) at the grocery store.

If food preferences are behind a child's decision, parents might be tempted to discourage them by insisting on consistency and reminding them that they have to give up the meat dishes they do like. But even an [inconsistent vegetarian](#) is making a difference. Some [types of meat](#) have more environmental impact than others. Switching the whole family from beef to fish or from lamb to chicken could make a real difference.

Navigating Different Diets

Even if the rest of the family isn't ready to completely commit to a vegetarian diet, you can replace some of your family's meat-based meals with healthy and delicious [vegetarian recipes](#). For people who are reluctant to switch, [meat and dairy alternatives](#) make an easier transition than [legumes](#). Try to cut meat out of [breakfast and lunches](#) or develop a [Meatless Monday](#) habit. (Since vegetarian meals are cheaper, you can direct the [money you save](#) to pay for more expensive organic and free-range meats for your other meals.)

If your child is unwilling to go along with the family's incremental progress, it's time to help them develop independence. Show your support by teaching them kitchen skills. Then make your vegetarian child responsible for feeding themselves when the rest of the family eats meat. It will teach them to have the courage of their convictions. And cooking is an important life skill no matter what they choose to eat.

advertising



Reading time: 3 mins

[9 Baking Ingredients You Can Make Yourself](#)



By [Gemma Alexander](#)

Gemma Alexander has an M.S. in urban horticulture and a backyard filled with native plants. After working in a genetics laboratory and at a landfill, she now writes about the environment, the arts and family. See more of her writing [here](#).

Related Post