A vegetarian diet is one which does not include any meat or fish.

A vegetarian diet can be very healthy, but you need to find suitable alternatives to meat. It is important to choose the right variety of foods to provide all the essential nutrients to stay fit and healthy.
BREAKFAST

Breakfast makes a good start to the day and can help your concentration at school.

Option:
Breakfast cereal and milk + fruit juice/Vitamin C enriched drink.

SCHOOL MEALS

Always choose:
- A protein alternative (see inside for ideas).
- At least one carbohydrate food.
- At least one portion of vegetables or salad.

Tips:
- Only eat chips and pastries occasionally as they are high in fat.
- Fresh fruit or yogurt are good food choices to finish the meal.

PACKED LUNCHES

Choose from a variety of breads and fillings for sandwiches:

Breads
- Wholemeal
- Granary Rolls
- Pitta Bread
- High fibre white bread
- Crusty rolls
- Bagels
- Crispbreads

Fillings
- Cheeses
- Egg
- Peanut Butter
- Vegetable paté
- Hummus
- Salad

Alternatives to sandwiches:
- Pasta/rice/potato salad
- Slices of pizza
- Baked samosas

Other foods to include:
- Sticks of raw vegetables
- Yogurt
- Fromage frais
- Fresh or tinned fruit
- Bread sticks
- Dried Fruit
SNACKS AND DRINKS

Eat more fruit or extra sandwiches, teacakes, yogurt, fromage frais and breakfast cereals.

Try to cut down on snacks that are high in fat or sugar, such as crisps, cakes, sweets and chocolate.

Choose milk, water or fruit juice to drink.

MEAL IDEAS FOR A VEGETARIAN CHILD IN A NON-VEGETARIAN FAMILY:

- Cook an extra portion when making a vegetarian dish - freeze and use later when the family meal is not suitable.
- Remove a portion of sauce for Bolognese / casserole / curry / chilli before meat is added. Add beans / lentils / TVP / Tofu / Quorn as alternative protein for the vegetarian portion. Green/brown lentils give the appearance of red meat.
- Leave a portion of pizza meat-free.
- Have rice dishes such as vegetable risotto with grated cheese, bean paella, or vegetable pilau with dhal.
- Use tinned beans for sauces to be served with pasta or filling a jacket potato. (Tinned beans do not need soaking and are quick to prepare).
- Veggie burgers or nut cutlets are easy to buy ready made and are handy to serve instead of meat. (Grill rather than fry).
- Try vegetable stir fry with Quorn strips and noodles/rice.
- Make or buy individual vegetable flans/quiches.

Tip:
- Remember the whole family can enjoy the vegetarian dishes.
CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates are the main 'filler foods' and should provide the bulk of the diet.

Examples:
- Bread, Potatoes, Pasta, Rice, Chapatti, Noodles, Breakfast cereals, Plantain.
- Carbohydrate foods provide energy and B vitamins needed for growth.

Tips:
- Aim for 6 or more servings a day.
- 1 serving = 1 slice of bread, 1 bowl of cereal, 2-3 tablespoons of cooked rice or pasta.
- Choose more wholegrain carbohydrate foods such as high fibre cereals and wholemeal bread. The fibre in these foods helps prevent constipation.

Sugar, sugary foods and drinks are also carbohydrate foods, but are of little nutritional value.

Too much sugar, (especially when eaten between meals) is the main cause of tooth decay and excess weight gain.

Tips:
- Think of sugary foods as treats.
- It is best to avoid them between meals as this is when they are most harmful to teeth.
- Have milk or water instead of sugary drinks.
Protein is needed for growth and repair of body tissue.

If you eat a variety of foods you are likely to have the right balance of proteins.

Good sources of protein:
- Milk, cheese, eggs.
- Dhal/peas and beans - soya and baked beans; fresh, frozen or tinned peas; chick peas; kidney, blackeye, and cannellini beans.
- Lentils - red, green and brown lentils.
- Nuts - peanuts, almonds, hazelnuts, Brazil and cashew nuts.
- Seeds - sunflower and sesame seeds.

Tips:
- Aim for 2 - 3 servings a day.
- 1 serving (Depending on age) = 30 - 50g cheese, 1 - 2 eggs, 3 - 6 tablespoons of cooked beans, 50 - 80g Tofu/TVP/Quorn.

Other products:
- Textured Vegetable Protein (TVP) - meat substitute made from soya, looks like meat and can be bought dried as chunks or mince.
- Tofu - soya bean curd.
- Quorn - meat substitute made from a mushroom-like plant.

You do not necessarily need to buy meat replacement products.
You need some fat to provide energy and vitamins A and D.

There are two types of fat:
- Saturated - found mainly in animal products such as butter, cheese and milk.
- Unsaturated - found mainly in vegetable oils.

Eating too much fat, particularly saturated fat, may increase your long-term risk of heart disease.

Ways of reducing fat intake:
- Have fewer high fat snacks such as crisps, biscuits, chocolate and bombay mix.
- Grill rather than fry foods.
- Spread butter or margarine thinly.
- Choose semi-skimmed or skimmed milk.
- Use low fat yogurt and fromage frais instead of full fat varieties.

Choose polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats in preference to saturated fats.

Example:
- Olive oil, rapeseed oil, sunflower oil, soya oil, corn oil, polyunsaturated margarine.

Tips:
- Remember vegetarian convenience foods can be quite high in fat. Labels give information on the fat content which can help you to make a good choice.
- Fat found in many processed foods is the least desirable.
VITAMINS AND MINERALS

Essential for the body to function properly.

Fruit and vegetables are good sources of vitamins and minerals as well as providing fibre - have fruit and vegetables/salad every day.

Special care should also be taken to ensure an adequate intake of iron, B12 and calcium.

IRON - needed to form healthy red blood cells and avoid anaemia. All children should have a good intake of iron. Teenage girls have a particular need for a good iron intake.

Good Sources:
- Fortified breakfast cereals.
- Beans, peas, lentils.
- Wholemeal bread.

Tips:
- Try to eat at least 2 portions of iron containing foods per day.
- To help absorption of iron from these foods eat them with foods rich in vitamin C (e.g. oranges, tomatoes, fruit juice).

VITAMIN B12
Including some dairy products in your diet should provide adequate vitamin B12. For vegans avoiding all animal products, vitamin B12 can be found in products which are fortified with B12 such as some yeast extracts, soya milks, breakfast cereals and TVP products.

CALCIUM - needed for development of healthy bones, particularly during the teenage years.

Good Sources:
- Milk, hard cheese, yogurt, fromage frais, paneer.

Tips:
- Aim for 3 portions a day - 1 portion = 200ml milk or 25g cheese or 1 pot of yogurt.
- If having soya milk, choose one which is fortified with calcium (Check the label).
- If no milk based products are used it is unlikely that you will obtain sufficient calcium - seek advice.