

## **Vegan/Vegetarian**

About 367,000 kids in the U.S. are vegetarians, according to a recent study that provides the government's first estimate of how many children avoid meat. That's about 1 in 200. Other surveys suggest the rate could be four to six times higher than that among older teens who have more control over what they eat than young children do.

### ***Top 5 Meatless Platter Ideas from Celeb Chef and Mom Susannah Locketti***

1. Mediterranean Platter: On a large platter, include the following: hummus, tabbouleh, grilled pita chips, assorted olives, and crudités. Garnish the hummus with a dash of paprika, a drizzle of olive oil, and chopped fresh parsley.
2. Italian Platter: Place grilled polenta squares on a large platter and top with grilled, chopped eggplant, portabella mushrooms, and onions. Garnish with halved grape tomatoes, chopped fresh basil, a drizzle of olive oil, and season with kosher salt and pepper. Grated Parmesan cheese can be served in a smaller bowl on the side.
3. Asian Platter: Line a large platter with Boston lettuce leaves. Top each leaf with bean sprouts, shredded carrots, julienned cucumber, and thinly sliced red pepper. Top with grilled, cubed tofu and crushed peanuts. Serve with peanut dressing.
4. French Riviera Platter: Serve the following on a large white platter plate: a wheel of brie warmed on the grill, red and green grapes, grilled multigrain baguettes rubbed with garlic, assorted nuts, and honey. Garnish the cheese with fresh herbs for presentation.
5. Fast-Food Platter: On a large platter, place grilled veggie dogs and burgers on grilled whole-wheat buns. Serve with an assortment of thinly sliced vegetables, lettuce, pickle spears, and condiment bowls filled with ketchup, mustard, and relish.

Anecdotally, adolescent vegetarianism seems to be rising, thanks in part to YouTube animal slaughter videos that shock the developing sensibilities of many U.S. children. But there isn't enough long-term data to prove that, according to government researchers.

### ***What Moms Should Know about Being a Vegan/Vegetarian***

Vegetarian diets exclude meat, but the name is sometimes loosely worn. Some self-described vegetarians eat fish or poultry on occasion, while others -- called vegans -- cut out animal products of any kind, including eggs and dairy products.

Not only do vegetarians and vegans get the health benefits of a diet high in fruits and vegetables, but it's recently been reported by the Washington Post that eating red meat

increases the chances of dying prematurely, according to the first large study to examine whether regularly eating beef or pork increases mortality.

The study of more than 500,000 middle-aged and elderly Americans found that those who consumed about four ounces of red meat a day (the equivalent of about a small hamburger) were more than 30 percent more likely to die during the 10 years they were studied, mostly from heart disease and cancer. Sausage, cold cuts, and other processed meats also increased the risk.

Previous research had found a link between red meat and an increased risk of heart disease and cancer, particularly colorectal cancer, but the new study is the first large examination of the relationship between eating meat and the overall risk of death, and is by far the most detailed.

In contrast, routine consumption of fish, chicken, turkey, and other poultry decreased the risk of death by a small amount.

"You can be very healthy being a vegetarian, but you can be very healthy being a non-vegetarian if you keep your red-meat intake low," Walter Willett, a nutrition expert at the Harvard School of Public Health, said. "If you are eating meat twice a day and can cut back to once a day, there's a big benefit. If you cut back to two or three times a week, there's even more benefit. If you eliminate it entirely, there's a little more benefit, but the big benefit is getting away from everyday red-meat consumption."

Another recent study reported by Reuters found that young vegetarians consuming plenty of fruits and vegetables are eating a healthy diet, but they may also have an increased risk of binge eating and other unusual behaviors, researchers said.

After examining the diets, weight, and drug and alcohol use of 2,516 teenagers and young adults aged 15 to 23 who took part in a survey in 31 Minnesota schools, researchers found that young vegetarians reported more binge eating than meat eaters.

"Findings from the present study indicate that adolescent and young adult vegetarians may experience the health benefits associated with increased fruit and vegetable intake, and young adults may have the added advantage of decreased risk for [being] overweight and obesity," said Ramona Robinson-O'Brien, an assistant professor at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University in Minnesota.

"However, current vegetarians may be at increased risk for binge eating, while former vegetarians may be at increased risk for extreme unhealthful weight-control behaviors," she added.

It's important to practice healthy eating habits with your family whether or not you chose to eat meat or become a vegan/vegetarian.

## ***Connect with Other Moms about Being Vegan/Vegetarian***

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- [My Vegetarian Son Was Served Hot Dogs on a Playdate ... and I'm Mad As Hell!!!](#)
- [Are You a Vegetarian or a Vegan?](#)
- [Do You Eat Red Meat?](#)

## ***Related Momlogic Stories on Being Vegan/Vegetarian***

1. [This Mom Has a Beef with Meat](#)
2. [First U.S. Count Finds 1 in 200 Kids Are Vegetarian](#)
3. [Young Vegetarians May Risk Binge Eating](#)

## ***Additional Resources for Vegan/Vegetarian***

- [United States Department of Agriculture](#)
- [American Vegetarian Association](#)
- [American Heart Association](#)