Tackle child obesity with plants, says The Vegan Society

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Healthy weight as a vegan is not exclusive to adults. Plant-based diets can help children too, says The Vegan Society. The experts at the BDA - the Association of UK Dietitians - agree that well-planned vegan diets can support healthy living throughout childhood, from weaning to teenage years. This is timely advice since it has been confirmed that teen obesity rates in the UK are still rising(1).

Jasmijn de Boo, The Vegan Society CEO, said: "A well-planned vegan diet is an excellent start to life for children. What better way to tackle the obesity crisis in the UK than by setting healthy eating habits for our children at an early age? With the planet our children will inherit in peril due to the greenhouse gas emissions from farming animals, plant-based diets for children are more crucial than ever. " A healthy vegan diet helps children too

Vegans on average have a healthier weight than health-minded meat-eaters. According to two large studies in the UK and US(2), vegan obesity rates are under 2% compared to over 5% in health-conscious meat-eaters. Obesity significantly increases the risk of serious health conditions such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

Vegans also have the lowest body mass index (BMI) of any group, ranging between 22 and 23.5. This compares to BMI of 23.5 to 29 for health-conscious meat-eaters(3). Meat and dairy and other animal products are usually more energy-dense than fruit, vegetables, grains and legumes. These staples of a plant-based diet are rich in nutrients UK children currently lack, such as vitamin C, good Omega 6 fats and fibre. There is no dietary fibre in animal products.

The UK Government last week also drew attention again to the major greenhouse gas emissions due to farming cattle, sheep and other animals(4). The planet is currently on track for dangerous global temperature rises, with the risks of extreme floods and droughts, harvest failures and habitat loss which accompany it.

Vegan children tend to form excellent eating habits, and make better food choices through to adulthood. We all teach the children in our care not to harm animals unnecessarily, so it makes sense to put this compassion into practice at the dinner table.

Advice, information and recipes on the vegan diet and lifestyle are available from www.vegansociety.com and from The Vegan Society's social media channels.

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FOR MORE PRESS INFORMATION OR INTERVIEWS PLEASE CONTACT JIMMY PIERCE, MEDIA & PR MANAGER, media@vegansociety.com / 01215231738

About The Vegan Society

The Vegan Society is a registered educational charity (no. 279228) that provides information and guidance on various aspects of veganism, including to new and potential vegans, caterers, healthcare professionals, educators and the media. Visit www.vegansociety.com for more information.

Notes to editors

(1) Childhood obesity trends from primary care electronic health records in England between 1994 and 2013: population-based cohort study. Cornelia H M van Jaarsveld, Martin C Gulliford

(2) Spencer EA et al. Diet and body mass index in 38,000 EPIC-Oxford meat-eaters, fish-eaters, vegetarians and vegans. Int J Obes Relat Metab Disord. 2003;27(6):728-34

(3) Obesity, public health, and the consumption of animal products. Deckers J1. J Bioeth Inq. 2013 Mar;10(1):29-38. doi: 10.1007/s11673-012-9411-x. Epub 2013 Jan

(4) The Global Calculator http://www.globalcalculator.org/insights

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The Vegan Society

T. 01215231738
E. media@vegansociety.com
W. https://www.vegansociety.com

Additional Contact(s):
Out of hours: 07593 129599

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