Read the following text and study the notes below:

**One Child's Meat**

When Andrew Tallis was just a toddler sitting in a supermarket trolley, he asked a friend of his mother's who was pushing him round, what all that stuff in the freezer was. Thinking his mother would want him to be given an honest answer, the friend said it was chopped-up dead pigs and dead chicken and that's what people ate. Andrew, who is now eight years old, has been a strict vegetarians ever since.

"I tried to coax him out of it at first" says his mother, Mary Tallis, 28, a student at Manchester Polytechnic. "Then I believed it was something that would pass, but when he was three I bought a packet of fish fingers, because all children liked those, and he point-blank refused to eat any. Then he started to ask me what was in any packet or tinned food I bought. When he learned to read at five he checked himself.

"Now, I'm a vegetarian, too, because it was just too much bother preparing two meals, although my husband James still eats meat that he cooks for himself."

Andrew is not so unusual. Small children often turn a tortured face from plate to parent when they make the connection between meat and animals. Mealtimes are a notorious breeding ground for conflict, for most parents try their best to accommodate children whatever their latest food fad is - and today's parent is concerned with health, not power.

What families are increasingly having to cope with now is pressure from the new generation of highly articulate teenagers who are being made to think about the advantages and disadvantages of meat eating and meat production as butchers and vegetarians lobby for their support.

A Gallup survey conducted at the end of last year on behalf of the Realeat Company which makes vege burgers and vege bangers showed that one-third of this country's 4.3 million non-meat eaters are now children under 16. And a survey to be published next week by the Vegetarian Society indicates that because of pressure from students, 95 per cent of British universities, colleges and polytechnics are now providing vegetarian meals. In some student restaurants, more than one in five of the meals served are vegetarian.

The trend towards vegetarianism us being led by women, who are now twice as likely to be non-meat eating as men. But for non-vegetarian parents the arguments impressionable children bring home ignite a little time bomb that is ticking away in the kitchen. Even if parents have sympathy with the arguments, what they worry about is whether giving up protein-rich meat is safe for a body that still has a lot of growing to do.

According to Dr. Tom Sanders, lecturer in nutrition at King's College, London and an authority on the growth and development of vegetarian children, we need not worry if our offspring suddenly take it into their heads to give up meat. "One starts off life as a vegetarian, taking in only milk and cereal; so long as there are dairy products and a variety of other foods in the diet, vegetarian children can grow up just as healthy as omnivores."

Sanders, a meat-eater himself, says: "Problems come about when children go on to veganism and want to cut out milk and cheese altogether - then they have to avoid Vitamin B12 deficiency by taking supplements. Vegan children can still grow ok, although they are small in size and light in weight, but I'm not going to say that is harmful."

A collaborative study of the effects of the fibre contents of diet on bowel function and health in general by Professor John Dickerson, head of the division of nutrition and food science in the Department of Biochemistry at the University of Surrey, and Dr. Jill Davies, a senior lecturer in the Home Economics and Consumer Studies Department at South Bank Polytechnic, showed that lifelong vegetarians are healthier than meat-eaten.

"We discovered that certain diseases, like appendicitis, irritable bowel syndrome, haemorrhoids, varicose veins and constipation occurred more often among omnivores, and that the age at which they occurred was much earlier than in vegetarians," Davies says.

"Compared with omnivores, vegetarians had made only 22 per cent of the visits to hospital out-patients and had spent a similar proportion of the time in hospital. Converted into economic terms, the lifelong vegetarians we studied cost the NHS ￡12,340 compared with the omnivores" ￡58,062."

Davies adds: "I am not a vegetarian, but what our study showed us that vegetarianism is very healthy and would be good for children so long as their diet is very carefully planned. People often speak defensively about vegetarianism and a lot of nonsense is talked about vitamin deficiency. Take iron - most of it comes from plant sources, and because vegetarians eat a lot of fruit their intake of vitamin C will increase their ability to absorb iron."

Dr. Michael Turner, the former director general of the British Nutrition Foundation and now a consultant nutritionist, worries that teenagers may not have enough nutritional knowledge to ensure that a new regime has adequate nutrients, "I think parents should insist that their children make the change gradually to give them time to find out what are the right things to eat so that the body can adjust." Janet Lambert, a nutritionist with the Meat and Livestock Commission, claims that "In terms of 100 calories consumed, you get a lot more nutrients from meat than other foods. Evidence of the number of children who are becoming vegetarian is a bit vague. You're not allowed to interview children so the Gallup survey has come from parents."

The Vegetarian Society is currently running a campaign called SCREAM, School Campaign for Reaction Against Meat, which the campaign co-ordinator, Graham Clarke, claims was launched as an antidote to the meat industry's Adopt a Butcher advertising. Part of the campaign is a powerful half-hour video, which shows the inside of an abattoir and a cow being shot in the head.

It is hardly surprising that after this short, sharp, shock treatment many youngsters announce their conversion. Typical of what tends to happen next is explained by Barbara Humber, headmistress of Glendower Prep School in South Kensington: "My daughter Nicki decided to become a vegetarian when she was 14, but my husband and I remain carnivores. It can be a bit of a bore making two separate meals."

The accusation that the Vegetarian Society is bent on indoctrinating children is dismissed as patronizing by 17-year-old Chris Davies, a pupil at Bromsgrove High School in Worcestershire, and a vegetarian. "I don't think people of my generation can be indoctrinated that easily," he says. "I think it is healthier to be a vegetarian. I used to drink milk and eat cheese and eggs until I read an article recently about the cruelty inherent in milk production. Now I've given all those up, too, but I'm still very healthy."

Healthy, but only because his mother, teacher Margot Davies, has taken a lot of time and trouble to find out about the right alternative foods for him. "We were quite worried at first when he announced it, not because of the inconvenience, but about whether he would be getting the right sort of protein." she says. "You have to be prepared to do quite a bit of forward planning - particularly when you're a full-time working mother.

"Vegetarian cheese is very expensive, and soya milk costs more than ordinary milk and we can't get it delivered. Chris is entitled to his views and I don't want mealtimes turned into a battleground. He hasn't tried to convert us, but when we go out for a meal now we choose a vegetarian restaurant."

*The Times*, 25th February, 1988.

**Notes**

The text shows arguments for and against vegetarianism. A table is therefore a useful way to make notes.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Arguments for and against vegetarianism** | | | **For** | **Against** | | * Meat eaters eat chopped-up dead pigs and dead chickens * We begin life as vegetarians - eating only milk and cereal * Vegetarians - healthier * Vegetarians don't get appendicitis, irritable bowel syndrome, haemorrhoids, varicose veins and constipation so often * Vegetarians made only 22 per cent of visits to hospital * Iron and vitamin C come from plants * Milk production - cruel | * Meat - rich in protein * Meat - rich in the essential Vitamin 12 * More nutrients come from meat * Vegetarian chees and soya milk - expensive | |

[^](http://www.uefap.com/reading/notetake/noteeg6.htm#top)