- Vegetarianism

THE HEALTHY VEGAN

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VEGAN DIETS NEED MORE PLANNING and dietary knowledge than vegetarian ones, and plant milk fortified with B12 and perhaps calcium is advisable. People are often concerned about getting enough calcium and iron, but Sheila Skeaff says calcium intake is low in many groups, regardless of whether they eat meat or dairy, and Kiwi women can have low iron regardless of how much meat they eat.

Although dietary changes in themselves don't usually trigger an eating disorder, they may be a symptom of one, especially if accompanied by significant calorie reduction and over-exercise.

"For most young people it's a good idea to be aware of the environment and eat more healthily," says child and adolescent psychiatrist and paediatrician Hiran Thabrew of Starship Children's Hospital. "Parents can support these young people to adjust their diet in a healthy way, making sure they get enough quantity and variety of food. But if they notice their children significantly restricting the amount and type of plant-based food they're eating, they should seek advice from a health professional."

Athletes' bodies have high demands but seem to do well without meat. Studies have compared the performance of omnivorous athletes with vegetarians and/or vegans and come up with a consistent result: it makes no difference at all.