

Abstract

Veganism is a way of life based on the effort to eliminate or reduce as much as possible any form of exploitation and abuse perpetrated on animals for human needs. From a dietary point of view, we use the term veganism to exclude all foods of animal origin from the diet. Plant-based diets bring indisputable health benefits, but there may also be certain risks that need to be avoided. In recent years, interest in this lifestyle has increased and we are increasingly encountering it among children, even the youngest, who are particularly prone to health problems resulting from dietary errors.

This work is divided into theoretical and practical parts. The theoretical part contains information about the diet during pregnancy and lactation, in childhood and adolescence. Furthermore, attention is paid to veganism, especially from a nutritional point of view. The possible risks of plant diets in children and the recommendations and attitudes of health organizations are presented.

The main goal of the practical part of the work was to map what awareness of the mentioned risks and recommendations parents of vegan-eating children and adolescents have and whether they also follow the recommendations in practice. I was also interested in whether and how communication on this topic between parents and pediatricians took place. I also focused on the health status of vegan-eating children and the composition of their diets.

The information was obtained through a questionnaire, which was spread online and contained 31 open and closed questions. The research involved 67 parents of vegan-eating children. 52 of them also ate vegans as their offspring.

The results show that most parents believe that their knowledge of the recommendations and risks of a vegan diet is good. Most of them confirmed their presumption by stating which recommendations they followed and which risks they were aware of. More than half of the parents introduced the pediatricians to the fact that the child ate vegan, and most of them encountered a neutral response from the pediatrician. Some parents who did not inform the doctor about the child's vegan diet did so due to fears of a negative reaction, which seems unfounded in view of the results. Only 21 % of parents answered that their child sometimes suffered from a health problem related to vegan eating. The most commonly reported problems were failure to thrive, indigestion and vitamin B12 deficiency. After evaluating the children's diets, it turned out that only 29 % of them do not contain dietary mistakes and are therefore properly compiled. The most common mistake in the menu was lack of calcium sources. Infants and toddlers often lacked fat sources, while adolescents often had a protein deficiency problem. Almost all diets contained sufficient amounts of vegetables, fruits and cereals, as well as dietary supplements containing vitamin D and B12.

In conclusion, although veganism is not commonly recommended for children and has its risks, it is entirely appropriate to address this issue and educate health professionals and the general population

about this topic, as it can be assumed that in the future this lifestyle will still be more widespread across all age categories.

Key words

veganism, children, children nutrition, adolescents, risks of vegan diet, awareness, recommendation