Vegetarian Babies are Healthy!
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Tandavan, Doctor Dear Dr. Tandavan: I have a grandson aged eight months. He is quite healthy and whenever I start arti to Bhagwan he comes to me and loves to look at the Gods. The doctor told his mother that the baby is underweight because she is not giving him sufficient protein. The doctor advised my daughter-in-law to give eggs, chicken and beef to the child so that he retains proper weight. I am against eggs and meat, but my daughter-in-law does not believe me and says that she will give the food which the doctor has recommended. I want to know how I should impress that the child will be better if no meat is given at all? Also, are there any substitutes to give proper proteins to children of this age?

It is very difficult to solve your problem because you have a non-vegetarian mother who has a non-vegetarian physician. It is not an uncommon problem for the Indian Hindus that live here in America. It is certain that the physician does not understand the problem, and he probably does not have sufficient knowledge of vegetarianism in order to know that it is not at all necessary for anyone to eat animals.

It is a known fact that our bodies cannot tell whether the protein we ingest comes from plant or animal sources, for the amino acids are identical. It is also a known fact that the animal products are highly contaminated with antibiotics, industrial chemicals and other toxins that we absorb into our bodies when meat is eaten. Although there is some contamination of fruits and vegetables, it is not nearly as much as that in meat.

There have been numerous studies that show that a strictly vegetarian diet is actually healthier for infants and children. Three studies come to mind: Herbert, J.R., "Relationship of Vegetarianism to Child Growth in South India," American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 42: 1246-54, 1985; Andrews, et al, "Nutritional Status of Vegetarian Children," American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 35: 204-16, 1982; and Sanders, "Anthropomorphic and Dietary Assessment of Nutritional Status of Vegan

Preschool Children," Human Nutrition 35: 349-57, 1981. I am sure that your library could obtain these for you if you desire.

I would recommend the following books to your daughter-in-law to convince her of the advisability of a vegetarian diet: Diet for a New America by John Robbins; Diet for a Small Planet by F.M. Lappe; Transition to Vegetarianism, Ballantine Books; Vegetarian Baby by S. Ynetma and Vegetarian Children also by S. Ynetma.

It is no longer considered healthy to eat as much protein as most of the people in the West do eat. In fact, it has been shown that the excess protein, especially taken by meat eaters, is contributing to the marked increase in osteoporosis of mature females, some evidence of a link with cancer and certainly it does overload the kidneys.

I do not believe that there is any need for "manufactured" protein supplements to be given to children. Although there are a great many such products on the market, they may be very hazardous to one's health, as many foolish dieters have found out. The healthiest protein source for the infant is mother's milk and, as the child is weaned, the protein sources should be fruit, vegetables and dairy products. Animal proteins other than dairy products are to be eliminated because of their great contamination. You imply that you do not mind chicken; however you may not know that chicken is full of hormones greatly detrimental to health, especially in children.

Even if I were not a practicing Hindu, I would not eat meat of any kind because of the bad effect that it would have on my health. It is truly unwise for the immigrant Indian Hindus living here in America to accept the worst that our culture has to offer. Even the Surgeon General of the US is telling us that we eat too much meat, fat and sugar.

I certainly wish you well in your problem, and if I can be of any further assistance, please, contact the paper.

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