



UNDERSTANDING THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF A VEGAN DIET

WHY GO VEGAN FOR YOUR HEALTH?



A whole-food, plant-based diet can support good health, reduce the risk of chronic diseases and promote overall well-being.

Numerous clinical studies have been conducted that show that whole-food, plant-based diets are superior to omnivore diets when it comes to heart health, diabetes and other chronic diseases. (A list of clinical studies can be found on our website.)

HOW MEAT DAMAGES YOUR HEALTH

Many studies have shown that eating too much processed meat and red meat increases your risk of cancer (Ma and Qi, 2023). The World Health Organization has classified processed meats, including bacon, sausage, hot dogs and ham, as a Group 1 carcinogen (the same category as cigarettes), which means that there is strong evidence that these processed meats cause cancer. Eating processed meat increases your risk of bowel and stomach cancer (Cancer Council NSW, 2024).

Additionally, meat can be high in salt, and consuming too much salt can increase your risk of high blood pressure. Some meats are high in saturated fat, raising blood cholesterol levels.

There are also concerns about consuming fish because toxic compounds such as methylmercury, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), dioxins and pesticides accumulate in their tissues.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH DAIRY?

Dairy industry advertisements claim that drinking milk results in stronger bone density. However, studies have found no evidence to support this claim (Lanou, Berkow and Barnard, 2005). A study reported in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) suggests that a higher consumption of milk in women and men is not accompanied by a lower risk of fracture and instead may be associated with a higher rate of death (Michaëlsson et al., 2014).

A study at Harvard University found little evidence of the alleged health benefits of dairy and questioned the methodology by which dairy guidelines were determined (Willett and Ludwig, 2020).

Furthermore, various harms are associated with dairy products, such as saturated fats, lactose intolerance, and a link between dairy and cancer — as well as other illnesses — has been found (Cullimore et al., 2023).



WHAT'S WRONG WITH EGGS?

The fat and cholesterol found in eggs can harm heart health and lead to diabetes, prostate cancer and colorectal cancer (Mofrad et al., 2022).

WHERE DO I GET PROTEIN, CALCIUM, IRON AND VITAMIN B12?

Protein is found in nearly all foods in varying amounts. Foods that are high in protein include tofu, tempeh, seitan, lentils, beans, chickpeas, quinoa, nuts, chia seeds, hemp seeds and oats.

Calcium is found in many foods, including almonds, olives, kale, kidney beans, chickpeas, brazil nuts, bok choy, broccoli, blackcurrants and oranges. Many plant-based milks are also fortified with calcium.

Iron can be obtained from dark leafy vegetables, pulses, whole-meal bread and flour, dried fruit, sesame seeds and tahini.

Vitamin B12 is vital for red blood cell production and nerve function. It is produced by bacteria and cannot be obtained from plants. Vegan supplements, which are widely available, are the most reliable source of vitamin B12. (Plant-Based Health Professionals UK, 2024)



WHAT DO VEGANS TYPICALLY EAT?

You can still eat the same foods that you eat now because almost all foods can be 'veganised'. Here are some things you could be eating as a vegan:

Spaghetti bolognese, fruit smoothies, full Irish breakfast, falafel salad, pizza, hummus, tofu curry, soups, nut roast, quiche, porridge, lasagne, fruit crumble, ice cream, lentil curry, macaroni cheese, vegetable biryani, chickpea burgers, nut burgers, granola, salads, sausage rolls, omelettes, vegetable and black bean burritos, tortillas as well as food from every culture and culinary tradition.

DAIRY ALTERNATIVES

Nowadays, a wide variety of plant-based milks, such as soya, oat, coconut, rice, almond and hemp, is available in supermarkets. You will also find many vegan yoghurts and cheeses.



PROCESSED FOODS

While there are now a lot of plant-based meat and cheese analogues available to buy in supermarkets and health shops, it is advisable to keep processed food to a minimum — this is true for all types of diets. However, these products can be useful in the initial stages when you are transitioning to a vegan diet, and studies have shown that these are marginally healthier than their meat and dairy counterparts (Bryant, 2022).

JOIN THE VEGAN SOCIETY!

Connect with like-minded individuals who share your passion for the environment and animal rights. Access exclusive materials, recipes and guides to help you on your vegan journey. Be part of a movement that promotes plant-based living, animal rights and works to lobby the government to take action for a healthier planet.

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