

What is a Plant-Based Lifestyle and Why Should I Consider It?

A low-fat, plant-based lifestyle is comprised of an incredible variety of minimally processed whole grains, legumes (beans, peas, and lentils), vegetables, and fruits with minimal added oils. These foods provide for an almost endless assortment of tasty recipes and meals. It is a very satisfying way of eating.

The most comprehensive and well structured scientific studies completed to-date clearly indicate that this way of eating not only promotes vibrant health at any age, but also significantly improves a person's ability to prevent, arrest, more effectively battle, or depending upon the disease, even reverse, chronic, degenerative conditions including heart disease, type II diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis, cancer, gastrointestinal disorders, and autoimmune conditions.

Meat and dairy products are so heavily ingrained in our culture that asking you to consider removing them from your plate may sound like heresy, but I hope that the following reasons will be compelling enough for you to "test drive" this lifestyle for just three weeks. Medical doctors and PhDs in the forefront of nutrition research and lifestyle medicine repeatedly demonstrate the leverageable effect that the right food can have on health.

"All human populations of trim, healthy people have gotten the bulk of their calories from starch." John McDougall, MD

What we eat and drink on a regular basis is the single most important environmental factor in our health. It plays a more influential role than genetics in most cases with regard to chronic, degenerative diseases.

It is widely accepted that increasing our vegetable and fruit intake is a healthy change we can all make. Plants contain no cholesterol, are low in fat and rich in fiber, antioxidants, and other phytochemicals. The fiber helps to fill us up, encourages a healthy gastrointestinal system, and facilitates the efficient removal of carcinogens and other waste products, thereby preventing them from recirculating in our body. Researchers continue to discover additional benefits of the antioxidants and other phytochemicals that abound only in plants. Plants help to promote alkalinity within the body which encourages a decrease in inflammation.

What most people do not know is that it is equally important if not more important to remove the meat and dairy products from our meals.

- Meat is not a necessary source of protein. All of the essential amino acids are found in abundance in plants. Most of the chronic, degenerative diseases that plague our society are due to excessive protein intake. The overconsumption of protein in affluent cultures adds stress to the kidneys, which must process and excrete the excess. "In healthy people with no apparent diseases, it is estimated that they lose about 1/3 of their kidney function by the time they reach the age of 70 because of the high protein nature of the rich, American diet." John McDougall, MD
- Meat contains saturated fat which can lead to heart and other vascular diseases. Excess fat in our diet and stored on our bodies can cause us to produce excess hormones, which can increase our cancer risk. It can also lead to excess intramyocellular lipids, or fat within our cells, which can paralyze insulin and lead to type II diabetes.
- Meat contains cholesterol. There is no dietary requirement for cholesterol. Our bodies make all that they need. Cholesterol cannot be removed from meat as it resides within the cell walls and the cholesterol in all mammals is about the same, so switching from beef to chicken or turkey will not reduce your cholesterol. Elevated cholesterol levels can also lead to heart and other vascular diseases. At a cholesterol of 150 mg/dl and below, heart disease does not occur. This can be attained without medication simply by following this lifestyle.
- Meat contains high levels of the sulfur-containing amino acid methionine, which causes our blood and body tissues to become very acidic and can promote osteoporosis as our body utilizes bone material to neutralize this acid. Osteoporosis is not a condition of inadequate calcium intake. It is a condition of overly rapid calcium loss. The material excreted from our bones to neutralize the acidic environment created by the consumption of meat and dairy products is eventually filtered through the kidneys where it provides the building material for 95% of kidney stones. Those countries with the highest consumption of dairy products also have the highest incidence of osteoporosis. No level of calcium supplementation will keep a person in positive calcium balance

(that is, keeping more calcium than they are losing) if the person is consuming a diet containing meat and dairy products.

- When meat is cooked, carcinogenic substances form within the flesh known as heterocyclic amines and benzopyrenes. The longer and hotter the meat is cooked, the more carcinogens form. Additional carcinogenic substances form on the surfaces of grilled meat, known as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. There is no getting around heterocyclic amines and benzopyrenes, unless you stop cooking your food, in which case you need to be concerned with viral and bacterial contaminants such as e coli, salmonella, listeria, campylobacter, methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), Yersinia enterocolitica, and the prions that cause bovine spongiform encephalopathy or mad cow disease.
- All mammals store chemical exposures within their body fat. As larger animals eat smaller animals, the chemical residues further concentrate within the animals' fat as they move up the food chain. This is a process known as biomagnification. Being at the top of the food chain, not only are we exposing ourselves to all of the chemicals to which animals on the food chain below us were exposed, but a mother's fat reserves are used to produce milk for her nursing baby and all of the chemical exposures from all of the animals eaten on the food chain below can end up in her milk.

Humans are the only mammals that drink milk after weaning and the only mammals to drink the milk of another species. Drinking non-human milk causes a number of worrisome biological reactions.

- Dairy products are not an essential source of calcium. A study funded by the dairy industry determined that postmenopausal women consuming dairy products were in negative calcium balance (losing more calcium than they were retaining) and lost twice as much bone as postmenopausal women who avoid dairy products. Instead, obtain your calcium from green, leafy vegetables and legumes (beans, peas, and lentils).
- According to traditional regulatory criteria, the most comprehensive study of nutrition ever conducted, The China Study, determined that casein, which comprises 87% of dairy protein, is the most significant carcinogen ever discovered.
- Consuming dairy products raises the level of insulin-like growth factor 1 (IGF-1) in our bloodstream. IGF-1 is a powerful stimulus for cancer cell growth. When IGF-1 is mixed with breast cancer cells in a test tube, the cancer cells begin to grow rapidly.
- Dairy products also inhibit the activation of vitamin D, which is very protective against cancer.
- In 1993, the dairy industry established an internal guideline that there could be no more than 750,000 white blood cells (also known as pus cells) in 1 ml of milk. 1 ml is about 1/30 of an ounce.

Eliminate meat and dairy products and do our part to end world hunger. It takes 12 pounds of grain to produce 1 pound of beef. More people could be fed if the grain were eaten directly.

Eliminate meat and dairy and do our part to minimize global warming. Animal agriculture has the single largest impact on global warming, even more than all of the transportation sectors combined. In addition, rain forests are being destroyed to provide land for agricultural animals.

If and how much you choose to incorporate this way of eating into your lifestyle is up to you. I hope that you will test drive it for just three weeks and see how positively wonderful and full of energy you can feel. Please keep in mind that to reduce your risk or to significantly alter the course of a serious condition such as cancer, heart disease, or an autoimmune condition, dietary changes have to be significant.