

# The Natural Human Diet



When you see dead animals on the side of the road, are you tempted to stop and snack on them? Does the sight of a dead bird make you salivate? Do you daydream about killing cows with your bare hands and eating them raw? If you answered "no" to these questions, congratulations—like it or not, you're an herbivore.

According to biologists and anthropologists who study our anatomy and our evolutionary history, humans are herbivores who are not well suited to eating meat. Humans lack both the physical characteristics of carnivores and the instinct that drives them to kill animals and devour their raw carcasses.

## **Human Physiology**

Although many humans choose to eat a wide variety of plant and animal foods, earning us the dubious title of "omnivore," we are anatomically herbivorous.

## **Teeth, Jaws, and Nails**

Humans have short, soft fingernails and pathetically small "canine" teeth. In contrast, carnivores all have sharp claws and large canine teeth capable of tearing flesh.

Carnivores' jaws move only up and down, requiring them to tear chunks of flesh from their prey and swallow them whole. Humans and other

herbivores can move their jaws up and down and from side to side, allowing them to grind up fruit and vegetables with their back teeth. Like other herbivores' teeth, human back molars are flat for grinding fibrous plant foods. Carnivores lack these flat molars.

Dr. Richard Leakey, a renowned anthropologist, summarizes, "You can't tear flesh by hand, you can't tear hide by hand. Our anterior teeth are not suited for tearing flesh or hide. We don't have large canine teeth, and we wouldn't have been able to deal with food sources that require those large canines."

### **Stomach Acidity**

Carnivores swallow their food whole, relying on their extremely acidic stomach juices to break down flesh and kill the dangerous bacteria in meat that would otherwise sicken or kill them. Our stomach acids are much weaker in comparison because strong acids aren't needed to digest pre-chewed fruits and vegetables.

### **Intestinal Length**

Carnivores have short intestinal tracts and colons that allow meat to pass through the animal relatively quickly, before it can rot and cause illness. Humans' intestinal tracts are much longer than those of carnivores of comparable size. Longer intestines allow the body more time to break down fiber and absorb the nutrients from plant-based foods, but they make it dangerous for humans to eat meat. The bacteria in meat have extra time to multiply during the long trip through the digestive system, increasing the risk of food poisoning. Meat actually begins to rot while it makes its way through human intestines, which increases the risk of colon cancer.

[Read](#) author John Robbins' discussion of the anatomical differences between humans and carnivores or [review Dr. Milton Mills' entire article on the topic](#) to learn more.

## Human Psychology

Humans also lack the instinct that drives carnivores to kill animals and devour their raw carcasses. While carnivores take pleasure in killing animals and eating their raw flesh, any human who killed an animal with his or her bare hands and ate the raw corpse would be considered deranged. Carnivorous animals are excited by the scent of blood and the thrill of the chase. Most humans, on the other hand, are revolted by the sight of blood, intestines and raw flesh, and cannot tolerate hearing the screams of animals being ripped apart and killed. The bloody reality of eating animals is innately repulsive to us, another indication that we were not designed to eat meat.

## If We Were Meant to Eat Meat, Why Is It Killing Us?

Carnivorous animals in the wild virtually never suffer from [heart disease](#), [cancer](#), [diabetes](#), strokes, or [obesity](#), ailments that are caused in humans in large part by the consumption of the saturated fat and cholesterol in meat.

## Fat and Cholesterol

Studies have shown that even when fed 200 times the amount of animal fat and cholesterol that the average human consumes each day, carnivores do not develop the hardening of the arteries that leads to heart disease and strokes in humans. Researchers have actually found that it is impossible for carnivores to develop hardening of the arteries, no matter how much animal fat they consume.

Human bodies, on the other hand, were not designed to process animal flesh, so all the excess fat and cholesterol from a meat-based diet makes us sick. Heart disease, for example, is the number one killer in America according to the American Heart Association, and medical experts agree that this ailment is largely the result of the consumption of animal products. Meat-eaters have a 50 percent higher risk of developing heart disease than vegetarians!

## Excess Protein

We consume twice as much protein as we need when we eat a meat-based diet, and this contributes to osteoporosis and kidney stones. Animal protein raises the acid level in our blood, causing calcium to be excreted from the bones to restore the blood's natural pH balance. This calcium depletion leads to osteoporosis, and the excreted calcium ends up in the kidneys, where it can form kidney stones or even trigger kidney disease.

Consuming animal protein has also been linked to cancer of the colon, breast, prostate, and pancreas. According to Dr. T. Colin Campbell, the director of the Cornell-China-Oxford Project on Nutrition, Health, and the Environment, "In the next ten years, one of the things you're bound to hear is that animal protein ... is one of the most toxic nutrients of all that can be considered."

Eating meat can also have negative consequences for stamina and sexual potency. One Danish study indicated that "Men peddling on a stationary bicycle until muscle failure lasted an average of 114 minutes on a mixed meat and vegetable diet, 57 minutes on a high-meat diet, and a whopping 167 minutes on a strict vegetarian diet."<sup>9</sup> Besides having increased physical endurance, vegan men are also less likely to suffer from [impotence](#).

## Food Poisoning

Since we don't have strong stomach acids like carnivores to kill all the bacteria in meat, dining on animal flesh can also give us food poisoning. According to the USDA, meat is the cause of 70 percent of foodborne illnesses in the United States because it's often contaminated with dangerous bacteria like *E. coli*, listeria, and campylobacter. Every year in the United States alone, food poisoning sickens over 75 million people and kills more than 5,000.

Dr. William C. Roberts, M.D., editor of the authoritative *American Journal of Cardiology*, sums it up this way: "[A]lthough we think we are one and we act as if we are one, human beings are not natural carnivores. When we kill animals to eat them, they end up killing us because their flesh, which contains cholesterol and saturated fat, was never intended for human

beings, who are natural herbivores." [Learn more about how meat damages human health.](#)

## **Human Evolution and the Rise of Meat-Heavy Diets**

If it's so unhealthy and unnatural for humans to eat meat, why did our ancestors sometimes turn to flesh for sustenance?

During most of our evolutionary history, we were largely vegetarian. Plant foods like potatoes made up the bulk of our ancestors' diet. The more frequent addition of modest amounts of meat to the early human diet came with the discovery of fire, which allowed us to lower the risk of being sickened or killed by parasites in meat. This practice did not turn our ancestors into carnivores but rather allowed early humans to survive in periods when plant foods were unavailable.

## **Modern Humans**

Until recently, only the wealthiest people could afford to feed, raise, and slaughter animals for meat; less wealthy and poor people ate mostly plant foods. Consequently, prior to the 20th century, only the rich routinely were plagued with diseases like heart disease and obesity.

Since 1950, the per capita consumption of meat has almost doubled. Now that animal flesh has become relatively cheap and easily available (thanks to the cruel, cost-cutting practices of [factory farming](#)), deadly ailments like heart disease, strokes, cancer, and obesity have spread to people across the socio-economic spectrum. And as the Western lifestyle spills over into less developed areas in Asia and Africa, people there, too, have started to suffer and die from the diseases associated with meat-based diets.

**Source: PETA <http://www.peta.org/living/vegetarian-living/The-Natural-Human-Diet.aspx>**