

SHOULD YOUR FAMILY BE EATING

More Plants?

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YOU LIKELY HAVE NOTICED the growing popularity of plant-based foods. Restaurants offer meat-free burgers and cow-free milk. Supermarkets are well-stocked with tasty plant versions of chicken, fish, and cheese. Why is this happening, and how can a plant-based diet benefit you and your family?

First, some definitions. A plant-based diet is a pattern of eating built on foods made from plants. While many with this eating goal might include some animal foods, vegans adopt a plant-only diet. A whole-foods, plant-based (WFPB) diet gets most of its calories from unprocessed vegetables, fruits, beans/peas, potatoes/sweet potatoes, and whole grains. WFPB introduces nature's finest foods to create delicious burritos, sandwiches, pizzas, curries, soups, salads, smoothies, stir-fries and even desserts!

PLANTS AND HEALTH

Health can be a powerful motivation to choose a plant-based diet. If that inspires you, a WFPB diet may be an ideal choice. Decades of research show this food pattern reduces the risk of developing many chronic illnesses, such as heart disease, Alzheimer's, cancer, and diabetes. This is a concern even for young people. Studies going back over twenty years found clinically significant lesions in the arteries of teens.

Existing disease may sometimes be reversed by plant-based lifestyle choices. For example, Dr. Dean Ornish and Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn have published multiple studies demonstrating the effectiveness of WFPB eating in reversing severe cardiovascular conditions –decreasing the amount of plaque in arteries.

Getting sufficient nutrients on a plant-based diet is not a problem. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, a large professional organization for dietitians and others trained in nutrition, issued this statement after a thorough study of plant-based eating: “appropriately planned vegetarian, including vegan, diets are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and may provide health benefits for the prevention and treatment of certain diseases. These diets are appropriate for all stages of the life cycle, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood, adolescence, older adulthood, and for athletes.”

EASY TIPS

Choosing plants as the foundation for your family's diet can be easy. Here are some strategies:

- Make a gradual change in eating patterns. Substitute similar plant-based foods – for example, all-plant hot dogs instead of meat hot dogs in favorite meals.
- Try a new restaurant with vegan choices.
- Go for meat-free Mondays.
- Children will be more enthusiastic when you involve them in food shopping and preparation.
- Strengthen your purpose by learning all you can, as a family, about the reasons for living plant-based.

This simple dietary change is outstanding for health, animals, and our planet. Enjoy delicious nutrition, and thrive! ♦

For more information, visit Eugene Veg Education Network (EVEN) at www.eugeneveg.org

