

How A Balanced Diet Boosts Your Health

How do you know that someone you've just met is a vegan? Don't worry, they'll tell you.

Joke aside, many consider veganism to be a cult of sorts, while others see it as the second coming of Jesus, or something along these lines.

And speaking of Jesus and the Holy Book, if you take a look at God's own words, i.e. "medical advice" from the Big Guy himself, you'll see that He doesn't encourages extremes, one way or another.

"If you will listen carefully to the Lord your God and do what he considers right, if you pay attention to his commands and obey all his laws, I will never make you suffer any of the diseases I made the Egyptians suffer, because I am the Lord who heals you." – Exodus 15:26

According to the bestselling book in history, and I am talking about the Good Book here, which is considered by some to be nothing more than a tool, or a history book, while Christians take it at face value as a guidebook for life, the kosher rules in the Old Testament (God's Nutrition Plan that is) advocate for an omnivore diet.

Here's the quote:

"And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed to you it shall be for food.'"

"Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood

still in it.” – Genesis



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So there you Have it:

An omnivore diet, not a vegan, nor a carnivore diet. Nothing extreme, just follow the golden rule and you'll be fine. Yes, I know, today God is no longer in equation, as He was replaced by know-it-all dudes and dudettes with PHD's in nutrition and all that. Which brings us to what I like to describe as the modern cult of veganism or vegetarianism or whatchamacallit?

Let me clarify: I call it a cult, because there are countless stories of people whose children were basically starved to death as a result of their parents enforcing strictly vegan diets upon them. Do you think I am joking? Check out this excerpt from an article[1] via WaPo:

“In recent months, Italy has seen multiple cases of children on vegan diets being hospitalized for malnutrition. In June, a 2-year-old girl[2] was brought to a hospital in Genoa, where she spent several days in intensive care after doctors found her to be suffering from vitamin deficiencies and low levels of hemoglobin. And last June, an 11-month-old baby, whose parents are vegans, was treated[3] for severe malnutrition at a hospital in Florence.

Similar cases have played out in other countries as well. In 2007, a vegan couple were given life sentences[4] after their 6-week-old baby boy died of starvation in 2004. They had fed the baby a diet of mainly soy milk and apple juice, and a jury found the couple guilty of murder, manslaughter and cruelty to children. And in 2011, a French vegan couple were charged[5] with child neglect after their 11-month-old baby died from vitamin deficiencies.”

This article should be enough for someone suffering from “critical thinking syndrome”, i.e. if you can’t properly nurture a baby following a vegan diet, what makes you think that a strict vegan diet enforced upon an adult would be any better?

But let’s not get ahead of ourselves, the night is still young. Approximately two decades ago, it was generally accepted in scientific circles that vegans do not get enough nutrients from their diet, with an emphasis on essential amino acids (protein). Essential amino acids are the ones the body cannot create itself from scratch, hence they must be provided by the food we eat; and yes, essential amino acids are not available in plant-based foods, only in meat, eggs, milk and fish.

Yeah, I know, meat has a bad-rep nowadays, but the truth is that meat is the only complete food from a nutritional point of view, if you take into account organ meats.

Also, meat nutrients do not contain anti-nutrients like phytates, cellulose and tannins, as opposed to vegetables, hence meat nutrients are ready to use and very easy to break down by the body’s natural enzymes, which means you don’t require help from your intestinal bacteria to help with digesting it. Check out this graphic for more information:

Micronutrient Availability in Plant and Animal Foods

Vitamin A	12 to 24 times more bioavailable in animal foods
Vitamins B1, B2, B3, B6	Animal foods are best sources
Vitamin B12	Not found in plant foods
Vitamin C	Plants are better sources
Vitamin D	Not found in plant foods
Vitamin E	Very low in animal foods
Vitamin K1	Plant and animal sources
Vitamin K2	Not found in plant foods (except in a few fermented products, most notably natto)
Folate	Insoluble matrix of some plant foods impedes bioavailability
Iron	Heme (animal) iron is at least 3 times more bioavailable than non-heme (plant) iron; Many plant compounds interfere with non-heme iron absorption
Calcium	Some plants contain compounds that interfere with calcium absorption
Iodine	Some plants contain goitrogens which interfere with iodine utilization
Zinc	Animal foods are best sources; Some plants contain compounds that interfere with zinc absorption
ALA	Plant and animal sources; Approx 5% or less of ALA can be converted to EPA; Conversion of ALA to DHA is even lower
EPA/DHA	Not found in plant foods (except for microalgae and indigestible grasses); best sources are wild-caught fish and pastured meats / eggs

Why would someone embrace veganism? The answer is pretty simple: people are convinced that renouncing animal food will result in better health and a longer life span. Some are doing it for political reasons, i.e. they don't want animals to suffer, or so I've heard. Breaking news: plants also suffer[6] when you eat them, i.e. this is not an argument, from a scientific point of view.

So, veganism should be all about one's overall (better) health and life-span augmentation. However, you'd be surprised to find out there are not many serious studies to prove a clear

relationship between a vegan diet and a longer life span. There's one[7] on fruit flies, that I will not take seriously, though it's cited religiously by some, and then we have a German paper[8], titled '*Lifestyle Determinants and Mortality in German Vegetarians and Health-Conscious Persons*'.

The conclusion of the Latter is:

Both vegetarians and non-vegetarian health-conscious persons in this study have reduced mortality compared with the general population. Within the study, low prevalence of smoking and moderate or high level of physical activity but not strictly vegetarian diet was associated with reduced overall mortality. The non-significant reduction in mortality from ischemic heart diseases in vegetarians compared with health-conscious persons could be explained in part by avoidance of meat intake.

So, you don't have to be a hardcore vegan if you want to live longer. Meat and fish in your diet is ok, as long as you have a healthy life style, you exercise a lot, and you avoid drugs, i.e. you don't embrace a degenerate life style. And speaking of meat, processed meats are another story altogether with regard to one's health (they're a no-no basically), but let's concentrate on veganism for now.

There are some good points about the vegan philosophy though, because it encourages people to eat "healthy" foods, as in non-processed/whole foods. The main problem with the vegan diet is that is incomplete.

Another good thing is that being a vegan teaches people to look carefully at the ingredients in commercially available (processed) foods, which is also great. A vegan diet can show positive effects for the first 6 months or so, but then you will start to experience "cracks in the ice", as in you'll start to lose energy, you'll lose muscle mass and your BMI will shoot up; that's because your body enters "starvation mode" due to long-term lack of essential nutrients.

Don't get me wrong, you **can survive** on a vegan diet, but only AFTER you've developed vital biology. Vegan babies don't make it to adulthood[9]. And that's a fact.

Another thing about vegans is that they're constantly hungry. Let me explain using a vegan's own words[10]:

'I was eating way too little in the beginning, which made the diet harder to stick to, but now that I'm eating in abundance, the diet is a breeze. I also had to get used to packing food with me every time I left the house.'

See, going vegan is basically a self-inflicted disability. We evolved on a hunter-gatherer diet for hundreds of thousands of years; the agricultural revolution which resulted in eating insane amounts of grain, fruits and vegetables is a very new concept for our bodies. Our bodies are used to calorie/nutrient dense foods, like meat and fat. Eating huge amounts of low-nutrient foods is unusual, makes you dependent on food and it's highly impractical.

Being a vegan is a very time consuming business, and it's only possible in our high-tech society, where you can work without basically doing much (as in engaging in strenuous physical activity). Most people I know are flaunting their healthy vegan diet after abstaining from animal foods for just a few months. They finally drop it because it's almost impossible to function normally as a vegan if you're a normal person, with a job, a family, kids and all that.

Also, not eating animal foods is a clear survival disadvantage, as veganism has been only made possible due to modernity. Not to mention that people in Blue Zones[11] eat animal foods.

Don't get me wrong: eating plant foods, especially fruits, is healthy; but there's a difference between that and saying that animal foods are poison, while going full herbivore is the only path to eternal life.

There are theories that the diet should be different based upon your climate. Long, cold, dark winters will tend to promote the need for more animal foods, whereas living in tropical areas with year-round sunlight will promote the eating of more plant based foods.

Which is why vegetarianism and veganism came from India and the culture of certain Hindu religious sects, but not as a prescription as an optimal, healthy way of eating but due to religious proscriptions and restrictions.

Before globalism, international shipping and refrigeration there is no way one could survive living in Norway as a vegan and one's offspring would surely get rickets.

Bottom line: just eat real (as in whole/unprocessed) foods, exercise, smoke less, don't do drugs, have an active life style, don't go to the end of the spectrum, and meanwhile go look for vegan centenarians. Sorry but I couldn't help it.



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Resources

[1] https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/07/11/italian-baby-fed-vegan-diet-hospitalized-for-malnutrition/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.69cad620cfa6

[2] <http://www.thelocal.it/20160629/two-year-old-in-serious-condition-after-being-raised-vegan>

[3] <http://www.thelocal.it/20150703/italian-vegan-parents-probed-for-malnourished-baby>

[4] http://www.nbcnews.com/id/18574603/ns/us_news-crime_and_courts/t/vegan-couple-sentenced-life-over-babys-death/#.V4MkxfkrKUL

[5] <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france/8414195/French-vegans-charged-with-child-neglect-after-babys-death.html>

[6] <https://www.dw.com/en/when-plants-say-ouch/a-510552-1>

[7] <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16137851>

[8] <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15824171>

[9] <https://www.aol.com/article/news/2017/05/19/malnourished-baby-dies-after-parents-fed-him-vegan-diet/22099336/>

[10] <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-6590137/Woman-loses-20lbs-raw-vegan-diet.html>

[11] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_Zone