



## **Eat Clean: Don't Eat Meat**

Lauren Tabacchini

You go to a restaurant with your friend, and they order a steak, you order a salad. They then lecture on how humans were made to eat meat and need meat to survive; However, that is simply not the case. Meat is not necessary to ingest in order to maintain a healthy body and life. In fact, by consuming meat, you are doing your body more harm than good.

There are three types of diets for those not wanting to eat meat. Vegetarians, who do not eat any sort of animal, pescatarians who eat mainly plant-based but make an exception when it comes to fish and seafood, and vegans who do not eat any animal products or use any animal byproducts.

The idea that meat is necessary to maintain good health is a very westernized- specifically Americanized- idea. It is impossible for some to comprehend that their idea of health and way of living is not a one size fits all category. To prove this, there are an estimated 400 million people who eat vegetarian and survive, with most maintaining a healthy diet. In fact, those in India mainly identify as vegetarians, specifically those practicing Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism.

Eating plant-based has many health benefits that those who eat meat and are adamant about it turn a blind eye to, just as eating an excessive amount of meat has multiple detrimental effects. The vegetarian lifestyle has explicitly been proven to help people lose weight, lower cholesterol, lower blood pressure, and have a lower chance of acquiring type 2 diabetes.

The reason for a healthy vegetarian lifestyle being so attainable is that everything the human body needs to survive and thrive can be found in the plants and nutrients that grow out of the ground. A meat enthusiast's main argument for why the vegetarian lifestyle is unhealthy is that vegetarians do not get enough protein. However, beans, lentils, edamame, tofu, grains, green peas, nuts, egg whites, dairy products, and many more foods contain protein. Therefore, if one is living a vegetarian lifestyle, as long as they are consuming enough plant-based options for protein, there is nothing unhealthy about it.

For the people who eat meat as their primary source of protein and an excess of it, the health benefits are not quite the same. There are health risks associated with it, specifically with the overconsumption of red meat. In opposition to how vegetarians have a lower risk for high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes, overeating red meat puts one's body at risk for all of the above. In addition, taking more than a healthy amount of red meat can raise the risk for stroke, coronary heart disease, and cancer- specifically colorectal cancer.

If one is trying to eat plant-based, it can be damaging to the wallet as fresh fruits and vegetables tend to cost more than meat products. This is where vitamins and supplements come into play. Vegetarians can benefit from taking iron and vitamin B12. Vegans, in addition to iron and vitamin B12, should add a calcium supplement to their daily routine. Women who decide to eat plant-based are at an increased risk for iron deficiency, especially when not consuming meat products, so they should emphasize iron supplements in their day-to-day.

What one puts in their own body is entirely up to themselves. However, if you are looking to be healthy and to be at a lower risk for many health concerns, plant-based eating has a magnitude of benefits.

Sources:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/vegetarian-and-vegan-diets-q-and-a/>

[https://www.scripps.org/news\\_items/4258-is-red-meat-bad-for-you](https://www.scripps.org/news_items/4258-is-red-meat-bad-for-you)

<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/13-of-the-best-vegetarian-and-vegan-protein-sources/>

<https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/world-cultures-and-religions-plant-based-vegetarian-vegan-diet/>

<https://www.webmd.com/diet/features/is-it-better-to-be-a-vegetarian#1>