

Eating Less Meat



South Durham Green Neighbors

This is the fourth in a series on taking larger steps toward sustainability. You know yourself best. What would it take to get yourself to eat less meat?

Are Plant-based Diets Really That Great? Yes!

PlantPure Nation, a documentary on plant-based diets, makes claims about the environmental and health benefits of those diets. A check on two databases of articles, Proquest Central and Pub Med, backs up these claims. (See references below.)

Note: Plant-based diets vary from complete veganism to a diet of primarily plants with small quantities of fish +/- chicken and no red meat.

Environmentally, British researchers have found that the plant-based diets results in lower greenhouse gas emissions. The age-and-sex-adjusted mean GHG emissions in kilograms of carbon dioxide equivalents per day (kgCO₂e/day) were:

- 7.19 for high meat-eaters,
- 5.63 for medium meat-eaters,
- 4.67 for low meat-eaters,
- 3.91 for fish-eaters,
- 3.81 for vegetarians and
- 2.89 for vegans.

In other words, eating lots of meat = bad, eating less or no meat = good.

Medical research articles can be confusing, but by checking medical review articles you can avoid trying to make sense of lots of individual research studies. In these reviews, researchers look at all the studies they can find on a topic, check the quality of the research, and crunch the numbers to find out what the evidence really says.

Below are some sources, but here's the bottom line: **Plant-based diets significantly reduce the risk of:**

- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Hypertension
- Total cholesterol
- LDL Cholesterol
- Colorectal cancer
- Stroke

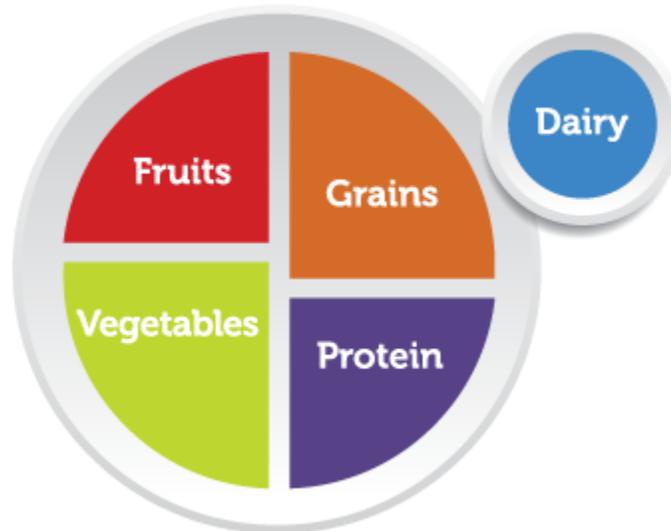


When it comes to plant-based diets, what's not to like?

Creating Your Plan

If you still want to eat meat, there's an easy way to make sure you are at least not overindulging in it:

Think of your plate as a circle divided roughly into quarters. **Fill a little less than ¼ of your plate with meat**, ¼ or slightly more with grains (or possibly legumes if you have a problem with grains), and ½ with fruits and vegetables. What could be simpler?



However, the farther you go toward a vegan diet, the greater the benefit for yourself and the planet, so how far will you go?

Do you need to move to less (or no) meat one step at a time? How about starting with eliminating red meat? If that is relatively painless, try eliminating chicken and then seafood. The next step could be a lacto-ovo (milk and eggs) vegetarian diet. And finally, there's a totally vegan diet. For that, be sure to learn about covering all your nutritional needs including protein, calcium and vitamin B12.

If you like to know all the nitty-gritty, *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 8th edition* (<http://tinyurl.com/DietaryGdlns2015>) gives information on your calorie needs and specific amounts of various kinds of food to eat for Mediterranean (Appendix 4) and vegetarian (Appendix 5) diets.

Too complicated? For meat-eaters, try ChooseMyPlate (<http://tinyurl.com/ChooseMyRecipes>) for **menus and recipes**. A specific two-week plan including shopping lists and recipes can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/2WeekMenus>.

Vegans can find many recipes at Meatless Mondays (<http://tinyurl.com/MeatlessRecipes>). And there are lots of vegan cookbooks at the library under "vegan cooking".

So, what's your plan?

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