

The Real Story Of Food And Health - Vegetarianism

Often it is argued, "I would rather enjoy my life and eat what I want rather than live a few years longer." This overlooks two significant issues. First is the negative impact that chronic conditions have on your quality of life. Living one year longer might not matter (now), but living a decade with Alzheimer's disease or a lifetime with poor health will matter. Secondly, health not only increases your physical ability, but also your mental aptitude and outlook. People are designed to live happy, healthy, and fulfilling lives. If we are not doing so, it is often because we have dietary constraints outside of the natural state for humans. By following traditional practices, we can begin to overcome endemic food-related health problems that have been accepted as unavoidable for millennia. Examples include frequent colds, headaches, and a range of degenerative diseases. One worldwide theme in most advanced dietary and religious systems is an emphasis on vegetarianism. Vegetarianism is often viewed as an optimal diet requiring greater skill to implement. Unfortunately, after losing much of our traditional knowledge, many Americans are unable to create a healthy diet in any form. This leads people to lean more and more on meat as an answer to a deficient and unnatural diet. It is a tribute to our adaptability that many people endure years of inadequate diet before a breaking point is reached. The good news is that once you understand what is occurring, you can begin to reclaim lost knowledge and the health that comes with it. Society today often makes the mistake of acting as if all dietary knowledge has been discovered. In order to achieve optimal health, it is vital to escape this mindset. Remember that only 100 years ago, we did not even know what vitamins were, and many "doctors" advised that vegetables should only be eaten by people who couldn't afford higher caloric foods. It is nearly inevitable that a broad range of generally unstudied substances exist in our foods that are harmful, healthful, or neutral depending on dietary intake, combinations, and individual genetics. There is such a broad range of variables involved in diet that no one can analyze everything at once and definitively determine the "perfect" diet. For this reason, empirical and traditional knowledge are some of the best starting points. Following are a few traditional diet and health practices that have been forgotten by most of society today. If you try to become more attuned to your body's reaction to these practices you will hopefully be able to learn what is most helpful to you. Effects are not always readily apparent or noticed, however, so when in doubt I try to simply follow traditional wisdom. These and other subjects can be studied in far greater detail, but the overview below serves as a good starting point. In fact, only a small fraction of modern society comes close to following this basic traditional wisdom, so for most people extreme study is superfluous. The first step towards vegetarianism is to simply eat better quality and more balanced food in general. As mentioned, the modern diet may contain an excessive amount of meat partially because of deficient nutrients from other sources. An overlooked fact is that native peoples, by eating a balance of animal products, were able to get the full spectrum of beneficial nutrients while eating less meat in general. Foods which are very common worldwide but absent in the modern diet include soup broths made with bone, organ meats, marrow, and foods made from collagen rich tissue such as skin and tendon. If only muscle had been eaten, as is the case for Americans today, greater quantities of meat would have been needed to supply the same nutrients. As with all dietary guidelines, it is impossible to know every nutritional factor in meat and its countless interactions for a given person's genetic makeup. There are hundreds of beneficial or harmful substances in meat just as there are in vegetables - with more being discovered each year. Traditional diets recognize that eating only the muscle tissue of an animal is both wasteful and provides unbalanced nutrient ratios. Next, to the extent possible, eat organic food and heirloom varieties. This is especially true of meat that is often a more concentrated nutrient and toxin source than plant products. The debate about organic vs. conventional food could fill volumes when fully analyzed. Suffice to say, it is likely organic foods contain less pesticide residue and a higher nutrient concentration since they are grown in a more traditional manner. The true benefit vs. the cost of higher priced organic food is impossible to determine due to infinite variables. I generally choose to save money in other ways rather than gamble with health. It is amazing how many Americans are conditioned to believe health insurance (and the associated job) are critical, but gambling on health with a questionable diet is accepted. Organic food also tends to support smaller, more environmentally conscious and sustainable farms. Some people find vegetarianism extremely difficult to implement long-term. One of the main reasons for such difficulty is that we are no longer taught basic culinary techniques that were once a fundamental part of education. Considering the health and economic importance of diet, it is not surprising that most societies placed great emphasis on learning skillful food preparation techniques. There are various reasons why this knowledge is being lost in modern society, but the good news is that you can regain culinary skill with practice. By visiting local immigrant and farming families or visiting other countries you can gradually pick up many quick, economical, and healthy recipes which have been time-tested for centuries. The recipes followed by such people are usually quick to prepare in contrast to the recipe books that many Americans use when "cooking at home." Preparing traditional foods yourself will enable you to regain a healthy diet that can be sustained and improved with practice. Vegetarian families or regions can give an overall view of the diet and staple foods rather than a few cookbook recipes. If you don't have the opportunity to visit Indian families, then strict Seventh Day Adventist or Buddhist families are other groups that have obtained long-term success. These groups are often quite happy to help spread their knowledge and vegetarian ethic. There are numerous enthusiastic and admirable American vegetarians, unfortunately many people new to any diet have insufficient practice to follow through. Also, studies show that many American "vegetarians", "vegans", "fruitarians", etc. are often less than honest about their diet due to guilt about "cheating" and "failures." Such dishonesty is very harmful. Some people simply have greater genetic ability to adapt to various dietary changes including vegetarianism. In any undertaking, practice and honest self-evaluation will lead to far greater success than trying to meet predetermined ego-driven goals. A second problem with vegetarian and other dietary knowledge is that a great deal of harmful information is disseminated through press agents on behalf of industry. Most information has little to do with health and a great deal to do with profit. The greater the profit margin and industrialization of a food product, the more positive press will be created. A classic example is propaganda campaigns that convinced most of America that tropical oils were bad and margarine was good. That tragedy is partially documented in the book *The Coconut Oil Miracle* by Bruce Fife. Even cigarettes were at one time promoted as

healthy for various ailments. Most widely publicized studies are actually funded and (if positive) disseminated through an industry group. If the researchers obtain a negative result, the study generally never sees the light of day. Of course there are also many extremely valuable (mostly government funded) dietary studies. Just remember that much of what you hear in the popular press regarding diet is extremely biased. Another issue that many people try to ignore, is nutrient deficiencies. Some individuals, perhaps due to genetics, seem to have more difficulty in reducing or eliminating animal products. First, vitamin B12 is the main nutrient almost universally accepted to be missing in vegetable sources. A deficiency can take decades to appear since B12 is stored very efficiently in the body. This lack of natural B12 may be the reason there are no traditional vegan cultures worldwide. However, in recent times there are documented families who have successfully adopted a vegan diet using vitamin B12 supplements. Successful vegetarian cultures such as Hindus obtain vitamin B12 from dairy products although this source may not be fully adequate for every individual's genetics dependant on the quantity of dairy consumed. Taurine and Carnitine are two "semi-essential" amino acids found only in animal products. Cats, for example, have lost the ability to synthesize taurine and will develop severe illness after the several years without it. Luckily, these two amino acids can be synthesized by the human body although there are claims synthesis may be below optimal in some individuals. As usual, synthesis is largely dependent on individual genetics and overall dietary nutrition. Proper ratios and adequate levels of essential amino acids (particularly lysine and methionine) aid in synthesis of Taurine and Carnitine. Supplements are also available. EPA and DHA are forms of essential fatty acids not readily available in vegetable sources. Luckily, EPA and DHA are also synthesized in the body from omega 3 essential fatty acids that are themselves lacking in the modern diet. Also, some individuals have a greatly reduced ability to synthesize EPA and DHA. One theory is that EPA and DHA (which are highly concentrated in oily fish) were common in the diets of some northern coastal cultures. These people lost the genetic ability to synthesize EPA and DHA. Higher levels of essential fatty acids in the diet should help in synthesis of EPA and DHA. Supplements are also available from fish oils or even marine algae. The topic of vegetarian nutrition can be studied in much greater detail, although far too little research has been funded in most cases. Much of the information is unfortunately biased by well intentioned but ill-informed vegetarian groups. To return to a recurrent theme, when pursuing a vegetarian diet, it is important to keep an open mind, don't deny the messages your body is sending you, and copy traditional recipes and practices. An unbelievable potential for improvement is often within easy reach when we simply reclaim the knowledge of health that has been gradually forgotten. By rediscovering native culinary traditions and honestly evaluating your body's reactions you will hopefully begin to realize the many benefits of a reduced meat or vegetarian diet.

About the Author

To treat or prevent this condition, Feingold suggested a diet that was free of. Adherence to the Feingold diet requires a change in family.

Source: <http://productsherbal.com>