EATING UP THE WORLD

the health consequences of human food choices

Contents

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our health crisis

Australia currently faces serious health challenges, with heart disease, Alzheimers disease (and dementia), cerebrovascular diseases (including stroke), lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) making up the top 5 leading causes of death in Australia.[1] **Obesity**[2,3,4,5,6,7] **and diabetes**[8,9,10] **are also at all time high levels and on the increase, both in Australia and worldwide, while the consumption of animal products is also at an all time high.**[11]

For children under fifteen, cancer is now the major cause of deaths from disease in USA[12] and second major cause in Australia.[1] In 2014-2015, 63.4% of Australian adults were overweight, an increase from 56.3% in 1995.[2] A decade ago the number of obese people in the world exceeded the number of starving people[13], while in 2014, a Lancet study estimated that the number of overweight adults in the world was 2.1 billion in 2013, compared with only 857 million in 1980.[4]

Despite this health crisis few people know about the huge amount of medical literature that suggests that plant-based diets can not only help prevent these major diseases but can also play a major role in reversing them. Many of those studies are referenced in this booklet. One such study is *The China Study* which *The New York Times* called the 'Grand Prix of epidemiology' and the 'most comprehensive large study ever undertaken of the relationship between diet and the risk of developing disease'. It concluded that people on a plant-based diet had far less incidence of heart disease, cancers, diabetes, multiple sclerosis and many other diseases.[14]

This booklet highlights the key health problems that Australia and the world is facing, while providing examples of effective solutions that made significant improvements to the lives of many, which ultimately will also lead to the increased well-being of our planet.

optimal health

From a human health point of view, the ideal diet is a plant-based diet.
Vegans suffer less obesity[15], have lower serum cholesterol[16] and blood pressure than those on a standard western diet[17] and enjoy a lower risk of Cardio Vascular Disease.[18] Many studies have shown a strong association between foods of animal origin and cancer.[14,19,20,21]

Vegans have lower rates of obesity than vegetarians and omnivores

Despite the recent fad of high protein diets, red meat, poultry and processed meat have continued to be linked to long-term weight gain.[22,23] The largest study ever comparing obesity rates of people eating plant-based diets was published in North America. Obesity has been found to be lower among Vegans compared to omnivores. A 2009 Californian study showed that vegans had the lowest BMI (23.6) and there was a progressive increase in BMI with increased content of animal products in the diet: 25.7 in lacto-ovo vegetarians, 26.3 in pesco-vegetarians, 27.3 in semi-vegetarians and 28.8 in non-vegetarians.[24]

A plant-based diet increases longevity

The Oxford Study not only confirmed lower rates of cancer and heart disease among vegetarians but also found a 20% lower premature mortality.[25] A 21-year study by the German Cancer Research Center concluded that vegetarian men reduced their risk of early death by 50%, while women vegetarians benefit from a 30% reduction in premature death.[26] A 2009 U.S. National Cancer Institute study found that diets high in red meat and in processed meat shorten life span not just from cancer and heart disease but from Alzheimer's, stomach ulcers and an array of other conditions.[27]

Athletic Performance is assisted by a plant-based diet

In all areas of sport Vegans and vegetarians are becoming more prominent.[28] Carl Lewis, one of the greatest athletes ever, winning 9 Olympic gold medals, stated that he had his 'best year as an athlete ever!' when he switched to a vegan diet.[29,30]

Vegans suffer less obesity, have lower serum cholesterol and blood pressure than those on a standard western diet and enjoy a lower risk of cardiovascular disease.

heart + blood health

Ugandans on a plant-based diet before 1960 had 100 times less heart disease than people in the USA on an animal product centred diet.

In Australia, the United States and in most of the Western world, heart disease is the leading cause of death.[1,31] **However heart disease was almost never found in populations that follow a diet low in animal foods. Ugandans on a plant-based diet before 1960 had 100 times less heart disease than people in the USA on an animal product centred diet**.[32]

Plant based diets prevent and reverse heart disease

As early as 1961, the Journal of the American Medical Association stated that ninety to ninety-seven percent of heart disease, the cause of most of the deaths in the United States, could be prevented by a vegetarian diet.[33] The China Study showed that American men died from heart disease at a rate almost seventeen times higher than their Chinese counterparts[34], while it found that heart disease can be prevented and even reversed by a healthy plan-based diet.[35] During both World Wars, when populations stopped eating meat, the reduction in heart disease was correlated to the reduction in their animal fat consumption.[36-38]

During the Korean War, more than 77% of young American soldiers autopsied had blood vessels narrowed by atherosclerotic deposits while the predominantly vegetarian Korean soldiers did not.[39,40,41]

Higher intake of red meat is associated with an increased risk of Heart Failure[42,43], while vegetarians experience less LDL cholesterol and heart disease than the rest of the population.[44] In a 12-year study conducted by Dr. Esselstyn, it was found that severe heart disease was reversed in 95% of people going on a vegan diet.[45]

Dr Dean Ornish, whose vegan program successfully treated Bill Clinton of his heart disease[46], had 82% of his patients reverse their heart disease in just one year. Ornish's group had a 91% reduction in the frequency of chest pain, while the control group experienced a 165% rise in the frequency of chest pain.[47]

Atherosclerosis

Dr. Ornish's program based on a low fat wholefoods plant-based diet was also found to reverse atherosclerosis in 75% of people.[45,48]

Hypertension

Very high blood pressure is 13 times more likely in meat eaters[49]. High blood pressure is uncommon or absent from Eastern and Western cultures eating a diet high in fiber; and low in fat and animal-based foods.[50] In fact US immigrants from hypertension-free African societies develop hypertension.[51] Non-heme iron, which is obtained from plant sources, assists in controlling blood pressure levels while the opposite was observed when heme iron from meat was consumed.[52]

Heart disease and (heme) iron

A study of 45,000 men showed that an increased risk of myocardial infarction among men with higher intake of heme iron, which is itself positively associated with iron stores[53], and this was backed up by a study of 16,000 women that found that a high dietary heme iron intake was associated with a 65% increase in heart disease.[54,55,56]

Plant sources of iron

Iron is in vegetables, legumes, grains, nuts, seeds and fruit[57], while dairy products are deficient in iron and inhibit its absorption.[58] A long-term study shows that vegetarians do not develop a deficiency in iron. Haemoglobin levels in vegetarians, which reflect the amount of iron in the blood, are comparable to those in people who eat flesh as a large part of their diet; and anaemia has actually been found less commonly among people who eat vegetable-based diets.[59] *The China Study* author T Colin Campbell reported that iron intake in rural China (34mg) was surprisingly high when compared to the average American intake (18mg) and was far more associated with plant protein intake than with animal protein intake. Chlorophyll, which comes from green plant food, is structurally similar to haemoglobin. People who consume about 100 mL of wheatgrass juice daily, reduced their transfusion requirement by over 25%.[60]

Very high blood pressure is 13 times more likely in meat eaters.

protein

In human mother's milk, the protein content is less than 1% by weight.

Human breast milk is one of the lowest-protein milks in the mammalian world.

Getting enough protein is easy following a plant-based diet

According to the American Dietetic Association, if we get enough calories and a reasonable variety of plant foods, it is almost impossible not to meet protein needs.[61] In human mother's milk, the protein content is less than 1% by weight.[62] Human breast milk is one of the lowest-protein milks in the mammalian world.[63] Five to six percent of the calories in human breast milk are from protein[64] and breast milk is consumed at a time when the demand for human tissue growth is at its highest, where a baby doubles its size during the first 2 years of life. The average adult vegan gets double this amount (11%) from their diet.[65] As a percentage of calories, fruits contain 8%, nuts and seeds and grains 15%, vegetables 26% and legumes 30%, all of which are much higher than the percentage of protein found in mother's milk.[66] Much of the data used to promote a high-protein diet was based on experiments on rats whose milk contains 49% of its calories as protein.[67, 68]

Protein stores are protected even during starvation

In 1981 when Irish prisoners went on a hunger strike, their protein stores were protected during starvation, with most of their energy to stay alive being derived from the men's fat stores. Upon autopsy it was determined that the hunger strikers had lost up to 94% of their body-fat levels, but lost only 19% of their body-protein levels at the time of death.[69]

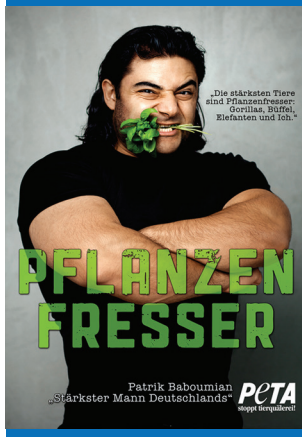
Plant foods provide all the necessary protein and essential amino acids

Plant foods contain all 9 essential amino acids and easily meet our protein requirements. Even the lowest protein vegetables, such as cassava root, have enough nutrients, including protein, to keep people healthy.[70] Eleven Peruvian children, ages 8 months to 35 months, recovering from malnutrition, were fed diets where all of the protein and 75% of the calories came from potatoes. Researchers found that even this simple potato diet provided all the protein and essential amino acids to meet the needs of small children.[71]

Excess protein leads to numerous health problems

The average omnivore gets 16.5% of calories from protein.[72] Dairy contains 25% protein, eggs 38%, meat 47%, poultry 49% and fish contains 68% protein.[73] Excess animal protein is implicated in the cause and promotion of kidney disease[74-79], osteoporosis[80,81], heart disease[43], diabetes[82], cancer[83-88], fatigue[89] and autoimmune diseases.[90] It has been shown that doubling animal protein intake from our diet increases the loss of calcium in our urine by 50%[91], whereas plant proteins do not have these same calcium and bone losing effects under normal living conditions.[92] Once this bone material arrives in the collecting systems of the kidney it easily precipitates into solid formations known as kidney stones.[93]

In fact over 90% of kidney stones found in people following a high-protein, western diet are formed primarily of bone-derived calcium. Following a healthy diet is the best way to prevent kidney stones.[94] Excess acid, as produced from excess animal protein, is a primary cause of bone loss leading to osteoporosis and kidney stone formation.[95] Excessive sulphur-based animal derived proteins lead to heart attacks, strokes, dementia and ulcerations of the colon and bowel.[96-99]



Plant foods contain all 9 essential amino acids and easily meet our protein requirements.

bone health

The Harvard University Nurses Study followed 78,000 women during a 12-year period and found that those who consumed the most dairy had more fractures than those who consumed the least.

Do people who consume dairy products really have stronger bones?

The highest dairy consumers such as Sweden, Finland, US and England have the highest rates of osteoporosis.[100,101,102] The lowest rates of osteoporosis and fractures are among people who eat little or no dairy foods and who have lower calcium diets, like people from rural Asia and rural Africa.[103,104] The African Bantu women on a near-vegan diet consume around one fifth of the calcium that is consumed in Australia, yet osteoporosis is extremely rare.[105-108] Australians and Americans consume three times the amount of milk than the Japanese, yet hip-fracture in Americans is 2½ times higher.[109]

A 1994 Australian study of elderly people showed that those with the highest dairy product consumption had approximately double the risk of hip fracture compared to those with the lowest consumption.[110] African-Americans ingesting 1000mg calcium a day have 9 times the hip fracture rate of native South Africans who ingest 196mg per day.[103]

The Harvard University Nurses Study followed 78,000 women during a 12-year period and found that those who consumed the most dairy had more fractures than those that consumed the least.[111]

Analysing 1,200 studies conducted during the past 30 years, Amy J. Lanou, Ph.D. concluded that dairy and other high-protein animal foods contribute to osteoporosis, trigger calcium loss from bones, while nutritious diets from whole plant foods helps build strong bones.[112]

Galactose and bone loss

A 2014 study of one hundred thousand men and women followed for up to two decades revealed that milk may increase bone and hip fracture rates.[113] Galactose (a sugar found in milk) consumed in high amounts has been shown to cause bone loss.[113,114]

Vitamin D and exercise for stronger bones

Increasing sun exposure and having greater Vitamin D levels leads to stronger bones.[115] 10-15 percent less dietary calcium is absorbed when there is insufficient Vitamin D.[116]

Vibrations from exercise cause movement of the cell nucleus, which may trigger the release of osteoblasts to build bone. Exercise increases bone density in the hip and inhibits bone loss in the spine and hip areas,[117] while also improving spine and femur bone densities.[118,119]

Animal protein consumption and bone loss

A 2001 study showed women who consumed a high ratio of animal to vegetable protein suffered 3 times the bone loss and 4 times the rate of hip fracture.[120] There is a very strong association between animal protein intake and bone fracture rate for women in many countries,[103] as well as calcium loss in the bones.[103,120,121]

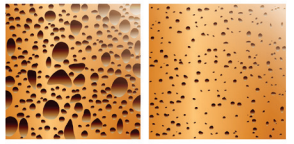
The Eskimos are among the largest animal protein consumers, while also having the world's highest osteoporosis rates.[122] An Atkins Center study found that people who adopted the Atkins Diet (a diet high in animal protein) excreted 50% more calcium in their urine after six months on the diet.[123] Meat, poultry, fish, seafood, dairy products are among the most acidic of all foods commonly consumed.[124]

Magnesium and silicon for strong bones

Many studies related to bone health show that magnesium is also necessary for maintaining and improving density and strength.[125-129] Good sources of magnesium include almonds, pumpkin seeds, spinach, silverbeet and kale, beans, bean sprouts, parsley, quinoa and buckwheat.[130] Silicon also plays an important role in bone formation, bone and connective tissue health, collagen synthesis and in matrix mineralization,[131] while also inhibiting the cells that breaks down bone tissue.[132]

What are the best foods for building strong bones?

Good plant calcium sources are deep-yellow and especially dark-green vegetables. Broccoli, brussels sprouts, silverbeet, kale, mustard greens, turnip greens, beans and others are loaded with highly absorbable calcium and a host of other important nutrients.[133] Vitamin C, vitamin K, potassium, carotenoids[134] and magnesium in fruits, vegetables and other plant foods, have all been shown to promote bone health.[135-143]



Good plant calcium sources are deep-yellow and especially dark-green vegetables

common diseases

The World Health Organization classified processed meats in the highest cancer risk category alongside cigarettes, alcohol and asbestos.

Cancer

In 2015 The World Health Organization classified processed meats in the highest cancer risk category alongside cigarettes, alcohol and asbestos.[144]

Cancer and elevated iron levels

When there is enough iron in your blood, your body is about five times more effective at blocking the absorption of excess iron from plant foods from animal foods,[145] explaining why heme iron is associated with cancer.[146] Excess heme iron increases cancer risk.[147-149] A 14-year Finnish study that found those with higher iron stores had 3 times the risk of colorectal cancer and 1.5 times the risk of lung cancer.[150]

Colon cancer and meat (red and white)

Colon cancer rates rise with increased meat consumption[151-154]. Colon cancer is extremely rare among Native Africans on mostly plant based diets, with 50 times less colon cancer compared to African Americans eating a Standard American Diet.[155]

Prostate cancer and plant-based diets

Soy milk drinkers had 70% less risk of prostate cancer compared to dairy drinkers[156]. Harvard University found that those who consumed the most dairy had two to four times the rate of prostate cancer.[157] Japanese men eating fish products four or more times per week had a 54 percent increased risk of developing prostate cancer compared to men who consumed fish products fewer than two times per week.[158]

Breast cancer and plant-based diets

The British Journal of Cancer found that Japanese women who eat meat daily have an 8.5 times higher risk of breast cancer, while cancers of the blood such as leukemia, multiple myeloma, and non-Hodgkin lymphoma were all drastically reduced for those avoiding meat.[159]

Ovarian cancer and plant-based diets

Risk factors in ovarian cancer are eggs, milk, cottage cheese, yogurt, animal-based calcium, animal fat and cholesterol,[160] while ovarian cancer was 3 times more likely in women who ate eggs 3 or more times a week than in women eating a plant based diet.[161-163]

Diabetes

Severely restricting calories and losing weight causes blood sugar levels to drop,[164] but when diabetics switch to a plant-based diet and are forced to eat so much that they didn't lose any weight, blood sugar levels still drop. After as little as 16 days, the insulin requirements were reduced by about 60 percent, and half of the diabetics were off insulin altogether, without losing any weight, simply by eating a plant-based diet.[165,165] Scientists at the Pritikin Center prescribed a low-fat, plant-based diet and exercise to a group of diabetic patients and of forty patients on medication at the start of the program, thirty-four of them were able to stop all medication after twenty-six days.[166] Other studies have shown that that 75% of adult diabetes patients stopped taking insulin soon after going on a vegan diet.[167-170]

Multiple sclerosis

Reducing or eliminating animal products in the diet has been shown to help prevent multiple sclerosis.[171-173]

Arthritis

High meat consumption has been associated with higher arthritis rates, while salad vegetables and nuts have been shown to be protective against arthritis.[174-177] Removing dairy products from the diet caused 45% of rheumatoid arthritis patients to go into remission and 70% to show significant clinical improvement.[178-180]

Asthma

There has been a large correlation between dairy consumption and asthma and asthmatics have shown marked improvement after following a vegan diet.[181,182]

Eye problems

Vegetarians and Vegans in a 2011 British study were at lower risk of contracting cataracts than meat eaters[183], backing up previous findings that increasing animal foods in the diet leads to increased eye problems.[184-186]

Kidneys

Animal protein overworks and damages the kidneys. Plant protein has shown no harmful effects, while a vegan diet improved kidney function.[186-196] Within two days of adding a can of tuna, kidney stone risk increased 250%.[197]

Diabetics switched to a plant based diet... after as little as 16 days, the insulin requirements were reduced by about 60 percent, and half of the diabetics were off insulin altogether.

brain health

For the prevention of Alzheimer's disease, vegetables, legumes (beans, peas, and lentils), fruits, and whole grains should replace meats and dairy products as primary staples of the diet.

Plant-based diets help prevent and reverse Alzheimers and dementia

People eating meat, chicken or fish were found to be nearly 3 times as likely to suffer from dementia as people on a plant-based diet.[198] The higher the animal saturated fat consumption, the more that the memory and speech suffered.[199-200] Clogging of the blood vessels in the brain with plaque contributes to Alzheimer's disease.[201] The 2014 *Dietary and Lifestyle Guidelines for the Prevention of Alzheimer's Disease*, published in the journal Neurobiology of Aging, stated: 'Vegetables, legumes (beans, peas, and lentils), fruits, and whole grains should replace meats and dairy products as primary staples of the diet'.[202]

Brain health and meat

People on high protein diets, low in carbohydrates, have shown impairment in memory which improved after carbohydrates were reintroduced.[203] Serotonin released in the brain helps memory and learning. It decreases when consuming high-protein meals (meat, dairy and eggs) and increases in a carbohydrate-rich diet full of starches, vegetables, and fruits.[204-206]

Brain health and vegetarians

Plant based diets reduce aggressive tendencies,[207] while vegetarian diets have been shown to promote healthy mood states[208] and correlated with a higher IQ in children.[209]

Omega 3 – plant vs. fish sources

Omega3 oils are essential for brain function. Plant sources of Omega3 oils are healthier than fish sources as consuming fish oil increases your cancer risk[210,211], especially prostate cancer.[212-215] Fish may increase your risk of a heart attack.[216-220] Virtually no fish is safe from contamination.[221] Mercury, lead, cadmium, PCBs and dioxins make fish one of the most contaminated 'foods' on this planet.[222] Fish elevates your LDL-bad cholesterol.[223-226] Humans can convert plant omega-3's (ALA) into DHA or EPA as the body needs them.[227-229] Flaxseed oil contains twice the amount of Omega 3 oil found in fish.[230,231] Fish eat algae to get EPA and DHA. Algae used for supplements are grown in tanks not exposed to ocean pollutants.[232]

vitamins & minerals

Plant sources of active B12 include nori, purple laver, edible algae, some mushrooms and fermented foods like tempeh, kimchi and tea.

Plant-based diets offer the best sources of vitamins and minerals.

Vegan diets are healthier with more nutrients compared to other diets.[233-235]

Vitamin A

Vitamin A is produced as beta-carotene breaks down in our small intestine. Beta-Carotene is found in yellow, orange, and green leafy fruits and vegetables.[236]

Iodine

A good source of iodine is seaweed and sea vegetables. The recommended daily intake of iodine is 150 mcg, which can be found in two sheets of nori or a half teaspoon of arame or dulse seaweed.[237]

Vitamin D

In Australia, from October to March, 10-15 minutes of unprotected sun exposure of the face, arms and hands before 10am or after 3pm, three to four times a week, provides enough Vitamin D. In Melbourne and Hobart from April to September and Sydney and Adelaide in June and July, you may need short periods of exposure in peak UV times like 10am to 3pm to get enough vitamin D.[238] For people working night-shift or others unable to get enough sun, taking one 2,000 IU vitamin D3 supplement each day can help avoid Vitamin D deficiency.[239]

Adequate Vitamin D levels help promote healthy bones and protect against cancer and MS.[240-247] Excessive calcium consumption lowers the activity of a kidney enzyme which lowers Vitamin D level.[248,249]

Vitamin B12

Vitamin B12 is not produced by plants or animals but is produced by bacteria.[250-252] Unwashed plants may contain remnants of B12 from bacteria present in the soil.[253] Today we are exposed to chlorinated water[254] and over-sanitised environments, reducing our exposure to bacteria and B12. Plant sources of active B12 include nori, purple laver, edible algae, some mushrooms and fermented foods like tempeh, kimchi and tea.[255-257] Many breakfast cereals, soy products, energy bars and other products are fortified with B12. Those not getting enough Vitamin B12 should take 250 mcg - 1,000 mcg of cyanocobalamin each day to avoid deficiency.[258-259]

Footnotes

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