

Nutrient Deficiencies from Vegan and Vegetarian Diets

The danger of vegetarian and especially vegan diets is nutrient deficiencies. Certain vital nutrients occur only in animal foods or are better absorbed from animal foods. These nutrients are particularly important for fetal development and for growing children.

VITAMIN A: Critical for healthy eyes, skin, bones, hormone production and immune function. Vitamin A plays a leading role in the formation of the fetus and the prevention of birth defects. Healthy populations consume amounts in the range of 20,000-30,000 IU vitamin A per day. Best sources are cod liver oil, liver and butter and egg yolks from grass-fed animals.

VITAMIN D: Essential for growth and healthy bones; protection against tetany, convulsions and heart failure in newborns; and in adults protection against type 1 diabetes, cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, arthritis and multiple sclerosis. Vitamin D is necessary for the function of the body's "feel-good chemicals" and protects against depression. Best sources are cod liver oil, lard and other pork products, shrimp, oily fish and egg yolks from grass-fed poultry.

VITAMIN K2: Critical for ensuring that calcium is put into the hard tissues (bones and teeth) and protection of the soft tissues, such as the arteries and kidneys, from calcification. Vitamin K2 is required for the synthesis of brain cells and for reproduction. Vitamin K2 occurs in certain fermented plant foods, such as natto, but best sources in the western diet are poultry liver, poultry fat and aged full-fat cheese.

WHAT VEGETARIANS SHOULD KNOW

A 2014 survey found that compared to meat eaters, vegetarians and vegans have

- More tooth decay,
- More allergies,
- More cancer,
- More mental illness,
- More need for medical care,
- A lower quality of life.

Nutrition and Health – The Association between Eating Behavior and Various Health Parameters: A Matched Sample Study, February 7, 2014.

VITAMIN B₁₂: Needed for red blood cell production, protection from toxins and for mental health. B₁₂ deficiency can cause paranoia, obsessive-compulsion disorder, tendency to irrational anger and dementia. All animal foods provide B₁₂ but liver is the best source. There is no B₁₂ in plant foods.

VITAMIN B₆: Is involved in brain function, production of histamine, the storage of carbohydrate as glycogen and the synthesis of many important compounds. We use the plant form of B₆ much less effectively than the animal form. Best sources are muscle meats, seafood, organ meats and raw milk.

ZINC: A co-factor in hundreds of enzymes and needed for hormone receptors and production of hormones such as insulin. Required for cell replication, skin integrity, immunity, digestion, glucose tolerance, healthy metabolic rate and sense of taste. Zinc is very difficult to absorb from plant foods. Best sources are red meat and shell fish.

IRON: Needed for red blood cells, energy and immunity, iron is best assimilated from liver and red meat.

CALCIUM: Dairy foods are the best source of usable calcium in Western cultures.

EPA & DHA: Critical for brain function. The best sources are cod liver oil, organ meats and seafood.

ARACHIDONIC ACID: Critical for healthy cell-to-cell junctures in the skin and intestinal tract, and for life-saving inflammation response. Important for brain function. Best sources are animal fats and organ meats.

AMINO ACIDS: In principle, the body can make taurine, carnitine, creatine and carnosine, but production is difficult in infants and in many adults. These amino acids are critical for many functions in the body, including energy and brain function. Best sources are meat, seafood and organ meats.

CHOLESTEROL: Infants and millions of people with genetic defects cannot make the cholesterol they need for growth, brain function and mental health. Only animal foods provide cholesterol.

"As yet, I have not found a single group of primitive racial stock which was building and maintaining excellent bodies by living entirely on plant foods."

—Weston A. Price, DDS

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Vegan & Vegetarian Diet Dangers



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Myths and Truths about Vegetarianism

MYTH: All the world's hungry people could be fed if grazing land were cultivated for crops.

TRUTH: Only about eleven percent of the land on Earth can be farmed for crops, a percentage that cannot be increased without deforestation, irrigation, chemical fertilizers and other destructive ecological practices.

MYTH: Meat consumption contributes to famine and depletes the Earth's natural resources.

TRUTH: Properly carried out through managed grazing, animal husbandry builds soil fertility and restores deficiencies created through grain production. One billion people on the Earth depend exclusively on animal foods for survival. Small mixed-use farms are the answer for personal and planetary health.

MYTH: Livestock is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions.

TRUTH: Only a small percentage of atmospheric methane comes from ruminant flatulence; the largest source is the burning of fossil fuels for electricity, heat, and transportation. A surprising source is emissions from wetlands. Raising animals on pasture is the most efficient way of pulling carbon from the atmosphere and returning it to the soil.

MYTH: Beef production requires 2500 gallons of water per pound of beef.

TRUTH: This figure is widely quoted by vegetarians without supporting evidence. The beef industry estimates that a pound of beef requires 435 gallons of water, mostly for grain production to feed the animal. Pasture-raised beef requires only the water that the animal drinks, which works out to about 30 gallons of water per pound of beef, about the amount used in one shower. By contrast, it takes 500 gallons of water to grow the wheat for one pound of bread.

MYTH: Vegetarians are not involved in killing animals.

TRUTH: About three hundred animals per acre are killed for the production of grain—often in gruesome ways. Only one animal per acre is killed for the production of beef. People who fly, drive, play string instruments, talk on the phone and take part in many other ordinary activities also rely on animal products, which are used in the manufacture of hydraulic brake fluid, plastics, waxes, glues, household items and many other products.

MYTH: The China Study found that people who ate more plant foods were healthier.

TRUTH: What's said in the bestselling book *The China Study* does not match the findings of the actual China-Cornell-Oxford Study, in which researchers found no correlation with more or less disease in people eating a lot of plant foods.

MYTH: Vitamin B₁₂ can be obtained from plant sources.

TRUTH: True B₁₂ is only available from animal foods; many vegans concede that those avoiding animal foods should play it safe and take a B₁₂ supplement.

MYTH: Our needs for vitamin D can be met by sunlight.

TRUTH: We only make sufficient vitamin D from sunlight at midday during the summer months by spending a lot of time unclothed in the sun; traditional cultures obtained this essential nutrient year round by eating vitamin D-rich animal foods.

MYTH: The body's needs for vitamin A can be met entirely from plant foods.

TRUTH: The human body converts carotenes from plants into true vitamin A very poorly and a large portion of the population lacks the enzymes to do this at all.

MYTH: Vegetarians live longer.

TRUTH: Some do, some don't. Health-conscious vegetarians who eat pastured dairy and eggs may well live longer than omnivores eating processed, packaged and fast foods. Analyses of studies on vegetarianism show that vegetarians have a greater all-cause death rate and even a greater death rate from heart disease.

MYTH: Vegetarianism protects against cancer.

TRUTH: The science on this is inconsistent and contradictory at best. Vegetarians are particularly prone to cancers of the nervous system and the reproductive organs. Soy, a staple in many vegetarian diets, can cause, contribute to and accelerate the growth of some cancers, particularly breast cancer and thyroid cancer.

MYTH: Eating meat causes heart disease.

TRUTH: Vegetarians have as much atherosclerosis as meat eaters and higher levels of homocysteine. Heart disease is associated with consumption of *trans* fats, refined vegetable oils and sugar, all of which come from plants.

MYTH: Meat-eating causes osteoporosis

TRUTH: Meat eaters do not have more osteoporosis than

vegetarians. Nutrients required for healthy bones, such as vitamin D, collagen and calcium, are either better absorbed or exclusively found in animal foods.

MYTH: The human body is not designed for meat consumption.

TRUTH: Humans are equipped with a mixed feeder's teeth and digestive system. The intestinal tract of a human being is more like that of a dog than a sheep. Animals that live on plant foods do not manufacture hydrochloric acid, have from two to four stomachs and a longer intestinal tract than humans.

MYTH: Meat putrefies in the gut.

TRUTH: The human digestive system is perfectly designed to digest meat, starting with a stomach that produces hydrochloric acid for digesting meat proteins. Enzymes in the small intestine break down proteins into peptides, which the body absorbs through the gut wall.

MYTH: Eating animal flesh causes violent, aggressive behavior in humans.

TRUTH: There is no science to support this claim. However, we do know that vegetarian diets lower serum cholesterol, and low cholesterol is associated with violent and anti-social behavior in humans, monkeys and dogs.

MYTH: A vegetarian diet is safe for children.

TRUTH: Some children can grow well on vegetarian diets rich in dairy products from pastured cows and eggs from pastured chickens. Children brought up on vegan diets have poorer bone health and reduced mental capacity compared to children brought up on diets containing animal foods. Rampant tooth decay in the baby teeth is common among children born to and breastfed by vegan mothers.

MYTH: Animal products are unhealthy because they contain numerous harmful toxins.

TRUTH: All foods contain toxins if raised with pesticides and herbicides. It is important to choose animal and plant foods that have been raised without toxic chemical inputs. The nutrients we get from animal foods, such as vitamins A and B₁₂, sulfur and zinc, help the body detoxify.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- westonaprice.org/health-topics/an-inconvenient-cow/
- westonaprice.org/health-topics/abcs-of-nutrition/vegetarianism-and-nutrient-deficiencies/
- westonaprice.org/health-topics/abcs-of-nutrition/twenty-two-reasons-not-to-go-vegetarian/