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- As plant-based diets are becoming more popular, you may wonder how it is possible to get all the necessary nutrients without eating animal products. Check out the Food for Thought article to learn more about what specific foods to incorporate in a plant-based diet and why.
- Do you have a strong, reliable support system? Read the Mind Matters article to learn more about why support systems are so important..
- Earth Day is Wednesday, April 22nd. Check out the Q&A section to learn how plant-based diets benefit the environment!

SWWC
LIVE WELL

ALLERGIES 101

By: Kristy Bendzick

“My nose has done more running than I have!” Does this sound like you during allergy season? If so, you are not alone. In fact, more than 50 million Americans experience various types of allergies each year. Some adults can experience allergies that can *change* throughout their lives, so you may not be stuck with allergies forever. First, let’s talk about how allergies work.

In a *proper* immune response, your body attacks foreign invaders (like a virus) to help fight sickness or to keep you from getting sick. In an *incorrect* immune response, your immune system attacks something that is *not* harmful to your health. An allergy occurs when your immune system has an incorrect response to an allergen. Some allergies are seasonal, some are year-round, and some can even be life-long. During different phases in your life, allergies can shift and change. Allergists call this developing a tolerance or intolerance to allergens.

Developing a tolerance:

Over time and with repeated exposure, you may develop a tolerance to certain allergen(s). When this happens, your immune system may not respond like it used to, which means you now have a lower level of immune system sensitivity to that particular allergen. You may have a reduced reaction or no reaction at all anymore. This explains why someone could have a reaction to a new house pet (mainly dogs or cats) and within a few months or years, the reaction is gone!



Developing an intolerance:

In the reverse case, you may develop an intolerance to certain allergen(s). When this happens, your body is responding at a higher level of immune-system sensitivity than it should, causing the reaction. This is why someone could have no symptoms of seasonal allergies for 20+ years, and then allergy season hits and they have signs and symptoms of seasonal allergies.

Remember, there are millions of other people suffering from allergies of all kinds. Odds might be in your favor that you could develop a tolerance to your existing allergies too! Although there is no cure for allergies, you can manage them with prevention and treatment. Seek your physician’s guidance if you need help with managing symptoms so *you* can run more than your nose this allergy season.



DID YOU KNOW?

Food allergies are the most common type of allergy. An estimated 32 million Americans have food allergies. This is 10 times greater than the prevalence of food allergies 35 years ago. Specifically, peanut allergies, which were once rare, tripled in prevalence in kids between 1997 and 2008. The severity of food allergy reaction symptoms seems to be increasing, too.

By: Leigh Pomnitz

QUESTION & ANSWER

By: Leigh Pomnitz

Q: WHAT NON-HEALTH-RELATED BENEFITS DOES A PLANT-BASED DIET OFFER?

A: Switching to a plant-based diet not only benefits your health — it can help protect the environment, save you money, and introduce you to new foods!

Less environmental impact

The production of plant-based foods such as fruits, vegetables, beans and legumes requires significantly less resources than the production of animal product foods. This creates less of an impact on the environment to produce plant-based foods. For example, it takes 1,800 gallons of water to produce just one pound of beef. It takes just a tenth of that amount of water to produce one pound of kidney beans. Animal agriculture also uses significantly more land than plant-based foods. Beans require just one-twentieth of the land it takes to produce animal protein.

Lower cost

There is a common misconception that eating a plant-based diet is more expensive than a diet that includes a lot of meat. While some out-of-season or imported fruits and vegetables may be more expensive at times, foods like rice, potatoes and beans are a much cheaper alternative to animal products.

Exposure to new foods

Adopting a more plant-heavy diet may expose you to new foods or recipes you might not have tried before. You might just find a new favorite food!



EXERCISE ANYWHERE

Regular movement is fundamental to good health. Moving or changing postures every 30 minutes is recommended. Exercise Anywhere provides you with basic stretching and strengthening exercises to incorporate throughout your day.

Shoulder Roll



Slowly rotate shoulders in a circular motion by moving them forward, up, back and down.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORT

By: Kim Aanestad



It is important to surround yourself with positive, supportive people throughout your life. Utilizing support from others has numerous benefits, both mental and physical. Support has been shown to reduce stress and feelings of isolation, leading to an overall better quality of life.

When you take on something new in life turn to those around you for support. Are you wanting to lose weight? Move to a new house? Take on a new job? By surrounding yourself with supportive people you will be able to manage these life events with ease and continue to meet your goals!

Start with your own friends and family:

Identify who is the most likely to be supportive in your friend group or family. Nurture those relationships and strengthen the bond by choosing to regularly spend time with those people. Lean on them during difficult times and celebrate successes with them.

Spend time with positive, happy people:

Not only will the energy uplift you, but you are likely to meet others who are there to find inspiration. Let go of people or things that are holding you back and surround yourself with positive energy! Live a life that is filled with people who will build you up and say goodbye to those who tear you down. Try out a new yoga studio, networking groups or motivational speakers who challenge you to be at your best.

Share interests and values:

What are your hobbies or something that you love to do? When you find a hobby that you love, you will most likely meet others with similar interests. You will be able to bond over your shared love of pottery or baking for instance. Surrounding yourself with individuals that share what you love to do will help grow your support network. Go out of your way to provide support and encouragement to others as well, then watch how that support is provided back to you.

Spread the support:

Start with encouraging your friend or family member. A simple “You got this!” or “I know you can do it!” can go a long way. Show them you care by helping them reach their goal and by being a good role model. Make yourself approachable and spend time with that person. Creating a support system with someone you care about can help you both stay accountable.

**QUICK
CLICK**

VEGANHEALTH.ORG

Plant-based diets, specifically the vegan diet, can be intimidating or confusing. VeganHealth.org contains a wide range of topics related to vegan health, vegan diet and the vegan lifestyle. Not only can you find health and nutrition information on this site, but you can also find recipes and links to other vegan websites.

By: Kim Aanestad

CHALLENGE OF THE MONTH

MEATLESS MONDAY

By: Kristy Bendzick

Meatless Monday is a global movement with a simple goal: each Monday, cut out the meat from your diet. Choosing to replace meat with more plant-based foods can make a big difference for your health. These benefits include: reducing risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes, maintaining a healthy weight and promoting kidney health. Going meatless is also great for the planet. Skipping one serving of beef each week for one year saves the equivalent emissions to driving 348 miles in a car. Visit meatlessmonday.com for more information and for recipes to try for your next Meatless Monday!

PLANT-BASED PLANNING

By: Julia Miller

Plant-based diets are becoming very popular for many different reasons, including potential health benefits, animal rights, environmental impact or personal preference. Since these diets eliminate certain foods like meat, seafood and dairy, there is a risk for deficiencies of essential nutrients such as: calcium, vitamin D, vitamin B-12, protein, omega 3's, iron, zinc and iodine. However, these nutrients can be found in whole foods, fortified foods or supplement form to meet your nutritional needs. If you are adopting a plant-based diet, consume a variety of fruits, vegetables and grains and make sure you are including foods containing the following nutrients:

Calcium and vitamin D: work together to protect your bones—calcium helps build and maintain bones, while vitamin D helps your body effectively absorb calcium.

Sources: Milk and dairy foods. Dark green vegetables. Fortified products: juices, cereals, soymilk and tofu.

Vitamin B-12: helps keep the body's nerve and blood cells healthy and helps make DNA.

Sources: Predominantly animal products. If you are following a plant-based diet, consider a vitamin supplement or fortified soy products.

Protein: is an important building block of **bones, muscles,** cartilage, **skin,** and blood.

Sources: Animal products, soy products, meat substitutes, legumes, lentils, nuts and seeds.

Omega-3 fatty acids: play a structural role in your brain and eyes. Support brain development and reduce the risk of inflammation, depression, breast cancer, and ADHD.

Sources: Fish, eggs, canola oil, soy oil, walnuts, ground flaxseed and soybeans.

Iron: is a nutrient used to make new DNA and red blood cells, as well as carry oxygen in the blood. It's also needed for energy metabolism.

Sources: Animal proteins, lentils, enriched cereals, whole-grain products, peanut butter, dark leafy green vegetables and dried fruit. To help your body absorb iron, eat foods rich in vitamin C, such as strawberries, tomatoes and broccoli at the same time.

Zinc: is a mineral that's crucial for metabolism, immune function and the repair of body cells.

Sources: Cheese, whole grains, soy products, legumes, nuts and wheat germ.

Iodine: is crucial for healthy thyroid function, which controls your metabolism.

Sources: Seafood and dairy. Soybeans, cruciferous vegetables and sweet potatoes may prevent iodine absorption. However, just ¼ teaspoon of iodized salt a day provides enough iodine.

For better guidance, meet with a dietitian and consult with your doctor before starting any vitamins or supplements.

FEATURED RECIPE

ZUCCHINI, BLACK BEAN AND RICE SKILLET



Nutritional Info

Calories	278
Fat (g)	9
Carbohydrates (g)	38
Fiber (g)	7
Protein (g)	10

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 small zucchini, quartered lengthwise and sliced
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 cup diced green bell pepper
- 1 can whole black beans, drained, rinsed
- 1 can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 clove minced garlic
- 3/4 cup water
- 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 cup instant white rice, uncooked
- 1/2 cup shredded Cheddar and Monterey Jack cheese blend

DIRECTIONS:

1. Heat oil in large skillet over medium heat. Add zucchini, onion, garlic and bell pepper; cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add beans, undrained tomatoes, water and oregano. Increase heat and bring to a boil.
2. Add rice; stir well. Cover; remove from heat and let stand 7 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Sprinkle with cheese.

Optional: add chicken or chickpeas to the skillet if desired.

PREP TIME: 20 MIN

COOK TIME: 10 MIN

SERVES: 4