



TO YOUR HEALTH



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Vegan Diet vs. Plant-Based Diet: What is the Difference?

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By now we've all heard of someone we know going "vegan" or eating a plant-based diet. The American diet or eating patterns are evolving. More people are questioning the wisdom of eating large amounts of animal foods and moving toward eating more plant foods. There are other relatively newer terms such as, "whole-food, plant-based diet" and "plant-forward;" other terms have a longer history. Further complicating the understanding is how the terms are quickly changing and mean different things to different people. The issue of climate change and planet-health urge us to take a closer look. What we eat affects our physical body health as well as the planet health. Plant foods have a carbon footprint about half that of an eating pattern based on a meat rich diet.^(France 24) Let's take a look into what these terms mean to most of us today.

The term "vegan" was coined by Donald Watson in 1944 to describe one who fully avoids all animal products for ethical reasons. ^(Wikipedia) A vegan diet eliminates animal foods 100% of the time; it includes vegetables and fruits, seeds, nuts, whole grains, legumes, beans, oils and highly processed foods such as white rice, refined sweeteners, and bleached flour. One following a vegan diet may need to supplement (specifically Vitamin B12 found in animal products) to get all of the required nutrients. Over time, people have adopted the vegan way of eating motivated by animal cruelty, health, and the environment. The "vegan" lifestyle further aims to avoid causing animals harm, including not wearing clothing or shoes made with animal products.

The term plant-based was introduced by Thomas Colin Campbell in the 1980s emphasizing a

low-fat, high-fiber, vegetable-based diet that focused on health and not ethics. ^(Vegetarian Journal 10.2020) In a plant-based diet, foods are primarily from plants. It includes vegetables and fruits, seeds, nuts, whole grains, legumes, beans, and oils and highly processed foods such as white rice, refined sweeteners, and bleached flour. Most people think this diet is made up of 100% plants; however, some people include small amounts of animal products. By following a plant-based diet it does not mean that you are vegetarian or vegan and never eat meat or dairy. But rather, you choose to eat more of your food from plant sources. Consuming very small amounts of animal foods can be insignificant when speaking health benefits of diet. Plant-based diets provide all the required carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals for optimal health and are often higher in fiber and other nutrients.

A whole-food, plant-based diet is another eating pattern which is centered on whole, minimally refined or processed plant food and excludes or minimizes meat, eggs, dairy products, and highly refined/processed sweeteners, bleached flour, and oil. Someone eating this pattern will eat mainly vegetables (including starchy vegetables) and fruits, whole grains, and legumes. This eating pattern has become increasingly relevant because highly processed vegan foods have become widely available, making it possible to follow a plant-based diet eating very few whole plant foods. Commercially, labeling on these highly processed vegan foods dubs them "plant-based," essentially making vegan and plant-based synonymous. Often foods labeled "plant-based" are generally vegan, whether or not they are healthy is another issue.

These terms can be confusing, but the common theme is to proportionally choose more of your



food from plants rather than animals. To embrace this concept change your psychology: when you eat more plants you are adding more to your diet, not taking away or restricting. It is not an all or nothing proposition. Try these suggestions to get started with more plants:

1. Change how you think of meat. Smaller amounts. Use as a garnish or small ingredient rather than the centerpiece.
2. Fill half of your plate with colorful vegetables at lunch and dinner.
3. Go for the greens! Check out leafy greens such as kale, collards, Swiss chard, spinach, and other greens each day. Prepare them by steaming, grilling, or stir fry to keep their flavor and nutrients.
3. Choose good fats such as olive oil, olives, nuts, nut butter, avocados, and seeds.
4. Choose a meal once a week that is built around beans, whole grains, and vegetables.
5. Use a salad as a meal. Use dark green and red leafy greens with a variety of vegetables with beans, peas, herbs, or tofu.
6. Go for the whole grains! Try quinoa, buckwheat, barley, or oatmeal with seeds or nuts and fresh fruit.
7. A piece of fruit for dessert! Fresh apple, sliced orange, grapes, or seasonal fruit

Watch for more information connecting the impact of food choices on the environment and health from the CWV Green Team.



Spring Forward

On March 13th we will collectively set our clocks forward one hour for the change to **Daylight Savings Time**. Though we will gain an hour of daylight (woohoo!), this also means we will lose a precious hour of sleep. While this seems like a harmless change in our circadian rhythms, did you know it can lead to traffic accidents, heart issues, mood disorders and insomnia? Here are some ways to make this transition happen more smoothly. According to the Sleep Foundation, we can prepare ourselves for this adjustment in the days and weeks prior to the time change.

1. Practice good sleep hygiene; refrain from drinking alcohol and eating heavy dinners or snacks right before bed.
2. Establish a consistent sleep routine, going to bed and waking up at the same time each day and getting at least 7 hours of sleep.
3. Gradually alter your bedtime, waking up 15-20 minutes early leading up to changing the clocks.
4. Spend time outdoors. Natural light is the driving force behind circadian rhythms. Sunlight can alleviate feelings of tiredness during the day.
5. Nap in moderation during the day.
6. Refrain from consuming caffeine within 6 hours of bedtime.