

Plant-Based Diet

Fact Sheet

What is a Whole-Food, Plant-Based Diet?

It's a dietary lifestyle that maximizes the intake of whole, plant-foods and minimizes the intake of processed and animal-derived foods. It's a diet based on foods-as-grown: vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, chickpeas, split peas, lentils, mushrooms, herbs, spices and small amounts of seeds and nuts. Consumption of meat (including chicken and fish), dairy products, and eggs, as well as highly refined foods like bleached flour, refined sugar, and oil are minimized or eliminated.



Benefits of a Plant-Based Diet

- Prevents and arrests heart disease and type 2 diabetes
- Prevents and treats asthma, allergies, acne, acid reflux and more
- Decreases cancer risk
- Slows progression of certain cancers
- Prevents and halts the progression of a number of autoimmune diseases
- Prevents and reverses erectile dysfunction
- Lowers cholesterol
- Lowers blood pressure
- Eliminates constipation
- Enables healthy weight loss
- Enables healthy weight maintenance
- Improves immune function & lowers risk of colds and flu
- Longevity enhancing and age defying
- May mitigate the need for many medications
- Increases energy
- Improves sleep
- Decreases stress and anxiety
- Improves mood and mental clarity
- Decreases inflammation

Food and Nutrients to Increase



Vegetables

Vegetables are rich in a vast number of health-promoting nutrients, including phytochemicals lutein, lycopene and beta-carotene, along with vitamins A and C, many B vitamins and fiber. Vegetables can also be excellent sources of calcium and iron – nutrients often associated with animal foods. Eat a variety of colors to ensure you're consuming a wide array of nutrients.



Whole Grains

Whole grains are rich in B vitamins, protein, fiber and zinc and are also rich in phytochemicals, such as lignan and sterols. The best way to eat grains is in their most whole form, like brown rice, quinoa, bulgur, barley, oats, and corn. Whole grains can also be eaten in the form of whole grain breads, tortillas, and pastas, although these processed choices are less nutritious.



Fruits

Fruits can be rich in fiber, vitamins C and A, and are tremendous conduits of phytochemicals resveratrol and anthocyanidins. Choose whole fruits over fruit juice, which is void of fiber. Like vegetables, eat a variety of colors to get the greatest array of nutrients.



Nuts and Seeds

Nuts and seeds are rich in protein, calcium, and healthy fats called omega-3 fatty acids. Eat [nuts](#) and seeds like walnuts, cashews, almonds, pecans, sesame seeds, flax seeds, or sunflower seeds in small amounts – only a small handful a day – as they are high in calories.



Fiber

Fiber is found exclusively in plant foods – animal foods are completely void of fiber. Fiber is associated with lower rates of cancer and other chronic diseases, and it facilitates weight loss and healthy weight maintenance.



Water

Plant foods are rich in water. Water hydrates the body, and the hydration of the body's cells is crucial to proper immune, endocrine, cardiovascular, neural, gastrointestinal, muscle and skeletal function.



Legumes

Beans, peas and lentils are rich in protein, fiber, calcium, iron, and B vitamins. Eat a variety of legumes, such as lentils, chickpeas, black beans, pinto beans, and organic soybeans (called edamame).



Antioxidants and Phytonutrients

Antioxidants and phytonutrients are abundant in plant foods. Antioxidants slow aging, reduce inflammation in the body, and help prevent diseases – especially cancers. Phytonutrients can also protect against diseases like cancer and heart disease.

Food and Nutrients to Limit



Meat, Poultry and Fish

Meat and poultry are high in unhealthy saturated fat and cholesterol. Fish is also high in cholesterol and industrial pollutants.



Cholesterol

Dietary cholesterol is found only in animal foods – in conjunction with saturated fat, which is linked [to](#) high blood cholesterol and heart disease.



Eggs

Eggs are also loaded with cholesterol—about 200 milligrams for an average-sized egg. Consider that one egg yolk contains more cholesterol than a Double Quarter Pounder with Cheese! Since egg whites are 100% animal protein, they are not a healthful choice.



Refined Grains and Added Sugar

Unlike whole grains, refined grains (e.g. white flour, white rice) are comparatively void of fiber. Refined grains and added sugar are often found in processed foods – the culprit of inflammation and cell damage, leading to chronic disease and often linked to obesity.



Dairy Products

Dairy is high in unhealthy saturated fat and cholesterol. Whether whole or skim, all contains casein, the protein found in cow's milk and other dairy products made from cow's milk. Some research has shown that this type of protein has hidden dangers.



Processed Oils

Unlike whole plant food sources of fat, processed oils are lower in nutrients and higher in calories. Despite what you've heard, even olive oil is not a health food – it's 100% fat. Eat the fiber-filled, nutrient dense olive, not the oil.



Saturated Fat

This unhealthy fat is plentiful in animal foods. It raises cholesterol and leads to heart disease.