



Plant-Based Nutrition Quick Start Guide



plan.tri.cian: a healthcare professional who applies the science of whole food, plant-based nutrition as a catalyst to reverse disease, restore vitality, and promote human and planetary health.

The Plantrician Project is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit dedicated to harnessing the regenerative Power of the Plate to prevent disease, transform food systems, restore planetary health, and unite communities.

Did you know that heart disease, the leading cause of death globally, is preventable, treatable, and even reversible?

Did you know that Type 2 diabetes is largely the result of excess body weight and lifestyle?

Did you know that many forms of cancer can be prevented and treated with whole food, plant-based nutrition?

Did you know — High blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, acne, acid reflux (heartburn), allergies, sinusitis, and many autoimmune diseases — from MS (Multiple Sclerosis) to rheumatoid arthritis — are directly tied to an unhealthy dietary lifestyle?

This is good news! Why? Because it means that YOU— more than you've ever realized — have the power to protect your health and prevent disease IF you're willing to learn about and embrace a predominantly whole food, plant-based diet.



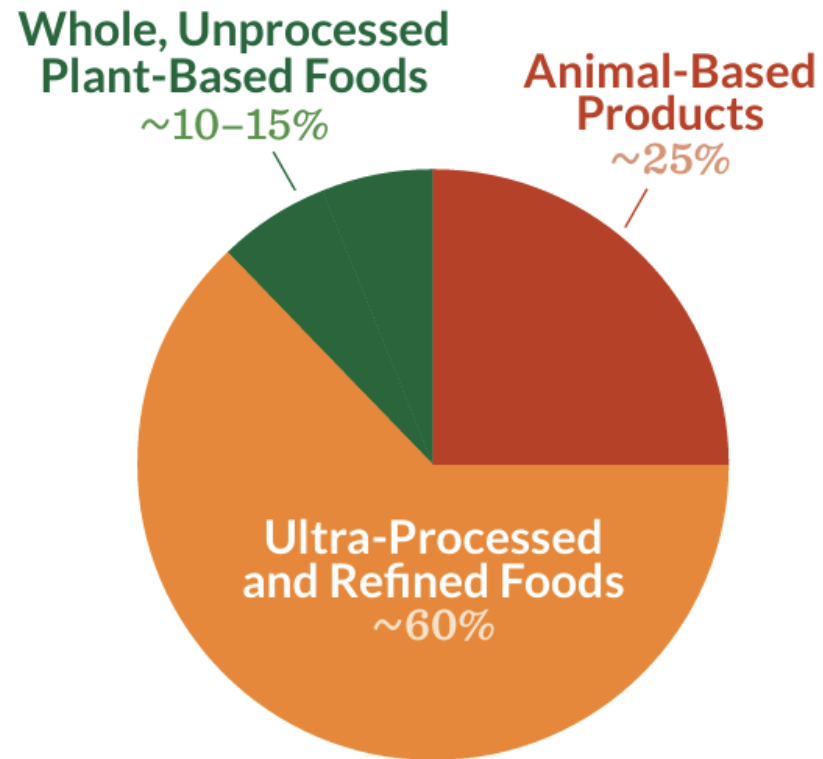
Start your transformation today!

Choose Health with Every Bite You Take

- Daily food choices may influence health more than any other lifestyle factors
- Whole, fiber-rich plant foods provide the biological tools the body needs to repair and thrive
- Consistent dietary shifts can produce meaningful improvements in energy, metabolic health, and disease risk



The Western Diet



The Western dietary pattern high in saturated fat, sugar, and sodium drives chronic inflammation and cardiometabolic risk

Source: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10302286/>



What is a Whole Food,
Plant-Based Diet?



The Benefits of a Whole Food, Plant-Based Diet

Improves heart health by lowering LDL cholesterol and blood pressure.

Enhances blood sugar control and insulin sensitivity.

Supports healthy weight management with high fiber, low energy density foods.

Strengthens gut microbiome diversity and digestive health.

Lowers risk of colorectal and other diet-related cancers.

Reduces chronic inflammation and oxidative stress.

Can prevent and treat asthma, allergies, acne, acid reflux and a wide array of other conditions

Supports kidney health by lowering dietary acid load.

Promotes longevity and healthier aging trajectories.

May mitigate the need for many medications

Reduces demand for factory farming and animal suffering.

Lowers risk of zoonotic disease linked to intensive animal agriculture.

Cuts greenhouse gas emissions compared with animal-based diets.

Reduces agricultural land use and supports ecosystem recovery.

Conserves freshwater resources across the food system.

Decreases nutrient runoff and water pollution from animal agriculture.



Food Groups 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.



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.



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.



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.



Food Groups and Nutrients to Increase



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.



Beans, Peas and Lentils

Beans, peas and lentils (also known as legumes) 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).



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.



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 Groups 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.



Eggs

When you hear that “an egg is nature’s perfect food,” 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. You will learn more about the ill-effects of animal protein consumption in this guide.



Cholesterol

Dietary cholesterol is found only in animal foods — in conjunction with saturated fat, which is linked to high blood cholesterol and heart disease.



Ultra-Processed Foods

These are industrially manufactured foods made with refined grains, added sugars, oils, and additives—like packaged snacks, sugary cereals, and fast food. They lack fiber and essential nutrients, promote inflammation, and are linked to obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cancer.



Food Groups and Nutrients to Limit



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

Foods that increase cancer risk:



Red & Processed Meats



Sugar-Sweetened Beverages



Ultra-Processed Foods



Dairy



Alcohol

Foods that decrease cancer risk:



Fruits & Vegetables



Soy Foods



Berries



Nuts & Seeds



Cruciferous Vegetables



Fermented Foods

Sample Menu

Adequate protein intake for a 160-pound adult (58 grams)

Meal	Protein
Breakfast: 1 cup oatmeal with blueberries, walnuts and 1 cup soymilk	17 grams
Lunch: Split pea soup, whole grain bread with hummus and a garden salad	21 grams
Snack: Apple and peanut butter	4 grams
Dinner: Mexican black beans and brown rice in corn tortillas with avocado and salsa	18 grams
TOTAL	60 grams

Protein



No meat, no problem

As long as you are eating enough calories from a variety of plant foods, getting adequate protein on a plant-based diet is easy!

Calcium

Plant-based foods are excellent vehicles for delivering calcium to our bodies. Beans and greens are rich in calcium and, unlike dairy, come packaged with countless other vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients that benefit health and improve calcium absorption and utilization. Calcium is a mineral found in the ground, which is why plants grown in the ground are excellent sources of calcium. Cows eat calcium-containing plants, which is why their milk contains calcium!

Food	Amount	Calcium (mg)
Collard greens, cooked	1 cup	357
Other plant milks, calcium-fortified	8 ounces	300-500
Tofu, processed with calcium sulfate*	4 ounces	200-420
Calcium-fortified orange juice	8 ounces	350
Soy or ricemilk, commercial, calcium-fortified, plain	8 ounces	200-300
Commercial soy yogurt, plain	6 ounces	300
Turnip greens, cooked	1 cup	249
Tofu, processed with nigari*	4 ounces	130-400
Tempeh	1 cup	184
Kale, cooked	1 cup	179
Soybeans, cooked	1 cup	175
Bok choy, cooked	1 cup	158
Mustard greens, cooked	1 cup	152
Okra, cooked	1 cup	135
Tahini	2 Tbsp	128
Navy beans, cooked	1 cup	126
Almond butter	2 Tbsp	111
Almonds, whole	1/4 cup	94
Broccoli, cooked	1 cup	62



If You Only Make One Change... The Truth About Dairy



- Populations that consume the highest amounts of dairy actually have the highest rates of bone fractures.
- Consuming greater than two servings of dairy per day is linked to increased risk of prostate cancer in men.
- Dairy stimulates insulin-like growth factor-1 (IGF-1), which accelerates cancer cell growth. High IGF-1 levels are normal during periods of growth like childhood, but full-grown adults do not want to raise their IGF-1 levels as it can mean that cancer cells are stimulated to grow.
- Most dairy milk contains contaminants like growth hormones and antibiotics. These substances are given to cows to promote growth and fight infections that occur from constant milking.
- Dairy is the number one cause of pediatric constipation and teenage acne.

Plant-based foods that are rich in iron include kidney beans, black beans, soybeans, spinach, raisins, cashews, oatmeal, cabbage, and tomato juice.



Plant foods can actually be considered better sources of iron than animal foods because they come packaged with countless beneficial nutrients, as well as iron enhancers like vitamin C. Calorie for calorie, many plant foods contain higher amounts of iron than animal foods.

Iron

Vitamin B12 is important for the development and protection of nerve cells and red blood cells and aids in DNA production. B12 deficiency can result in weakness, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, increased irritability, gastrointestinal distress, anemia, and nervous system dysfunction.

B12 is the only nutrient that cannot be adequately obtained from a whole food, plant-based diet. This is not because animal products are sole providers of B12. Vitamin B12 is not made by plants or animals, it is made by bacteria. Animals eat B12-containing bacteria via dirt and water, which then accumulates in their tissues and is passed on to humans who eat animal products. Because of our diligent sanitation efforts, humans rarely have the opportunity to consume B12-containing bacteria.

Vitamin B12



Transitioning to a Plant-Based Diet

- Start where you are today
- Focus on progress, not perfection
- It's about what you eat, not what you avoid
- Read Labels



Stocking Your Plant-Based Pantry



Refrigerator Staples

- Perishable vegetables
- Frozen mixed vegetables
- Perishable fruits
- Frozen fruit
- Frozen organic edamame
- Sweet potatoes and white potatoes
- Hummus (make your own, or look for low-fat brands)
- Whole grain bread (freeze)
- Non-dairy milks
- Tofu
- Tempeh
- Citrus
- Nutritional yeast
- Whole wheat flour tortillas
- Corn tortillas



Nuts, Seeds, and Nut & Seed Butters

- Walnuts
- Almonds
- Cashews
- Pecans
- Sunflower seeds
- Pumpkin seeds
- Peanut butter (no added sugar or oil)
- Almond butter
- Tahini
- Flax seeds



Canned or Dried Beans

- Black beans
- Black-eyed peas
- Chickpeas (garbanzos)
- Great northern beans (cannellini)
- Pink beans
- Pinto beans
- Red or kidney beans
- Lentils



Pastas and Noodles

- Whole wheat pasta
- Gluten-free pasta
- Brown rice noodles
- Soba noodles
- Vegetable and bean/lentil-based pastas



Whole Grains

- Barley
- Bulgur
- Couscous
- Millet
- Brown Rice
- Quinoa
- Wild rice
- Steel cut oats and/or old-fashioned oats



Other:

- Canned diced tomatoes
- Low-sodium tomato/pasta sauce
- Tamari or Bragg's liquid aminos
- Vinegars
- Salsas
- Dried herbs and spices and salt-free blends

Milk

Nondairy milks like soy, hemp, almond, or oat easily replace dairy milks in most cases.

To replace buttermilk: mix nondairy milk with lemon juice, apple cider vinegar or brown rice vinegar and let stand for 5-10 minutes.

Cream

Cashew cream beautifully imitates the creamy texture of dairy cream. Combine raw cashews with water or other liquid (e.g. vegetable broth or nondairy milk) and blend in a high-speed blender until completely smooth and creamy.

Butter

Vegan butter substitutes can be used to replace regular butter in equal amounts. Pureed fruits like applesauce or smashed banana also work well in place of butter and oils in baked goods.



Ingredient Swaps



Eggs

For baking, use a “flax egg” to replace a regular egg: Combine 1 tablespoon of ground flax seeds with 3 tablespoons of water and mix until gelatinous. Multiply this recipe by the number of eggs called for.

For binding (such as in veggie burger patties), use 2 tablespoons of cornstarch mixed with 2 tablespoons of water and mix well. Multiply this recipe by the number of eggs called for. Alternatively, use ¼ cup of silken tofu.

To replace scrambled eggs, try scrambled tofu.

Cheese

Cheese is often the most challenging for people to give up, but it is also the most crucial step toward better health. Sprinkle nutritional yeast on meals for a cheesy flavor and Parmesan cheese-like texture. Most nutritional yeast is also fortified with B12, a vitamin essential for good health. Also, look for recipes that use tofu or cashews as a substitute for cheese.

Build Your Own Plant-Based Bowl

Start with a Green

Spinach
Spring Mix
Collard Greens
Swiss Chard
Cabbage
Arugula
Romaine
Endive
Kale

Grab a Grain

Brown Rice
Sweet Potatoes
Farro
Quinoa
Millet
Red Rice
Bulgur
Wild Rice
Corn

Toss in Legumes

Roasted Chickpeas
Baked Falafel
Marinated Tofu
Tempeh Bacon
Teriyaki Tempeh
Tofu Scramble
Lentils
Beans
Peas

Add Veggies

Sweet Potato
Onions
Cucumber
Brussels Sprouts
Asparagus
Cauliflower
Tomato
Broccoli
Carrot

Sauce

Chimichurri
Cashew Cream
Pineapple BBQ
Tahini
Thai Peanut Sauce
Hoisin Sauce
Hummus
Pesto
Salsa

Garnish

Fresh Herbs
Nuts
Seeds
Chili Flakes
Dried Seaweed
Toasted Coconut
Pickled Red Onions
Berries
Avocado



Making Plant-Based Family-Friendly

Whole food, plant-based diets are healthy for the entire family. As you begin your journey towards a healthier lifestyle, it may be difficult to convince the rest of your family to get on board with a new way of eating. Here are a few ideas to encourage your family to embrace a whole food, plant-based lifestyle.

Give family favorites a makeover

Involve the entire family

Lead by example



Plant-Based on a Budget

One of the most common concerns about eating a whole food, plant-based diet is that it will be too expensive. This misconception likely comes from the belief that you must buy pricey “superfoods” and specialty products in order to adopt this way of eating. That is simply not true! In fact, a plant-based diet can cost the same or even less than the Standard American Diet.

- Plan Meals
- Stick to Staples
- Buy in Bulk
- Shop Smart for Produce
- Get Cooking



Dining Out on a Plant-Based Diet

Steak House

- Baked potato topped with vegetables and salsa and a side salad or salad bar

Mexican Restaurant

- Black bean or sofritas burrito bowl with brown rice and extra vegetables
- Naked taco salad, with lots of leafy greens, loaded with black beans, salsa and guacamole

Asian and Noodle Shops

- Tofu and veggie stir fry with brown rice
- Steamed vegetables, quinoa and zesty beans

American

- Veggie burger and a side salad
- Hummus appetizer and steamed vegetables

Italian

- Minestrone soup and a side salad
- Whole wheat pasta with marinara sauce and vegetables
- Loaded vegetable cheese-less pizza (whole grain crust if available)

Sandwich Shop

- Vegetable wrap or veggie sandwich and large salad
- Plant-based soup (black bean, vegetable) and large salad

Navigating Social Situations on a Plant-Based Diet



Whether you're attending a family gathering, dining out with friends, or attending a special event, it's important to have strategies in place that allow you to stay true to your plant-based principles while still enjoying the company of others. Here are some of the best ways to navigate social situations and maintain your commitment to a whole food, plant-based diet.

Make a Plan

Communicate Your Needs

Seek Out Plant-Based Restaurants

Bring Your Own Dish

Educate, Don't Preach

The Bigger Picture: The True Cost of Chronic Disease

Cost to Individuals



Out-of-Pocket Spending

More than half of U.S. bankruptcies cite medical costs as a contributing factor—most had insurance at the time.



Retiree Healthcare Costs

The presence of chronic illness in older adults increases the odds of needing long-term services and supports by over 300%, dramatically inflating retirement costs.



Caregiver Burden

Rising long-term care costs are placing financial and emotional strain on Gen Xers and millennials, many of whom are supporting aging boomer parents, impacting their own retirement savings.

The Bigger Picture: The True Cost of Chronic Disease

Government & Public Sector Burden



Medicare Spending

Cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, and cancer are the top cost drivers in Medicare, responsible for the bulk of inpatient admissions and prescription drug costs.



U.S. Health Expenditure

Two-thirds of all healthcare visits in the U.S. are related to chronic disease management or its complications.

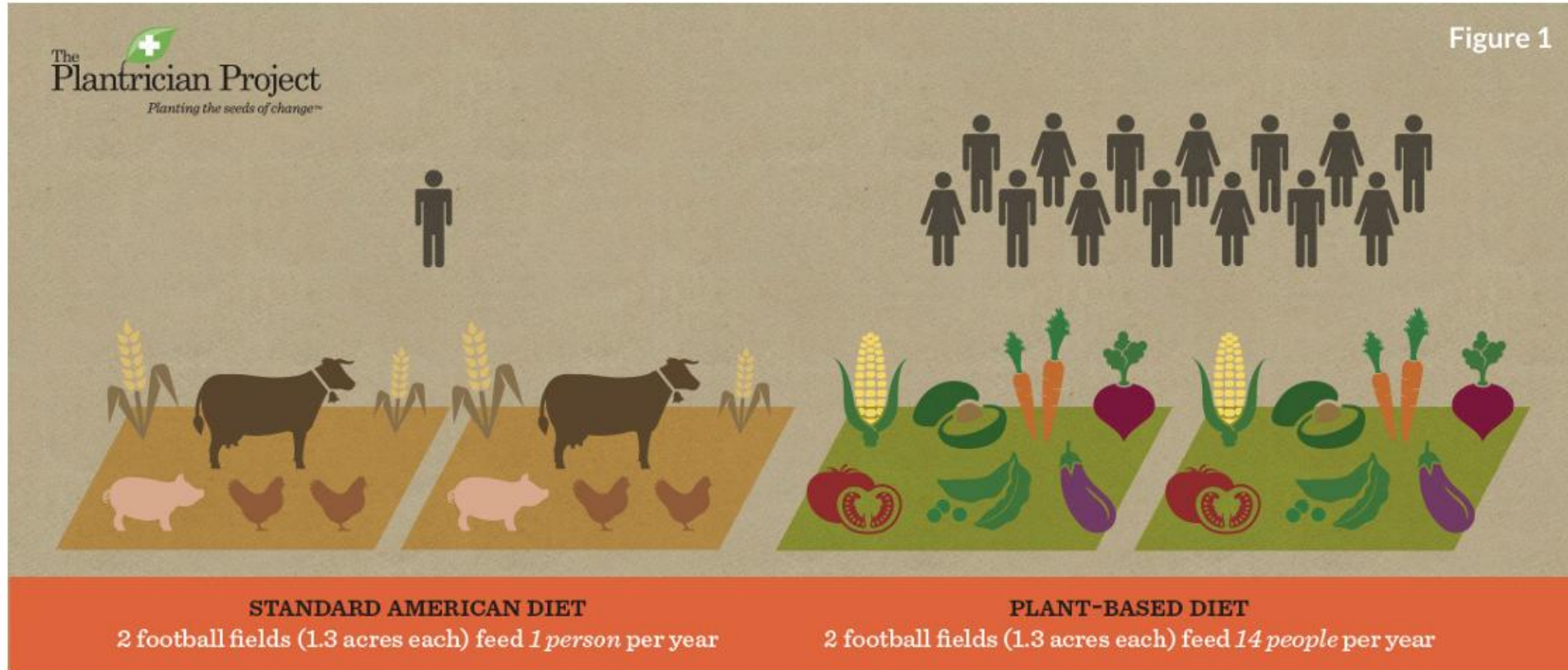


Global Health Expenditure

Chronic disease is a global economic drain, undermining GDP and causing massive mortality worldwide.

Environment

The good news: The dietary lifestyle that's the most health promoting and disease fighting is also what's sustainable and enables us to feed the world's growing population. A predominantly whole food, plant-based diet = global sustainability.





Plantrician[®]
University



Continue Learning Inside Plantrician University

Evidence-based education platform equipping students, health enthusiasts and healthcare professionals with practical nutrition science to help prevent chronic disease and advance human and planetary health.

- Certificate Program in Plant-Based Nutrition
- Over 40 Courses in Nutrition and Lifestyle Medicine

FREE for students and academic faculty!

PlantricianUniversity.org

Plant-Based Nutrition Quick Start Guide



The ultimate tool to kickstart your journey towards a healthier, plant-based lifestyle! Practical tips and resources that will help you make the transition with ease.

FREE to DOWNLOAD

[PlantricianProject.org](https://www.PlantricianProject.org)



*Today is the first day of the rest
of your life! Make today count,
and count the days to come.
Choose health with each and
every bite you take!*