



Alton Sustainable Eating



Healthy Food, Healthy Planet

The Difference Between the terms Vegan & Plant-based Plus Bonus: 20 Benefits to eating Vegan/Plant-based

By Dee Panes, ACAN's consultant on Sustainable Eating



A plant-based diet is different to a vegan diet.

The Vegan Diet

A vegan diet is more about ethics and not wanting to cause any harm to animals or see them suffer. The Vegan Society's formal definition is:

"Veganism is a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of animals, humans and the environment. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals."

Many folks may not be aware that veganism is a protected belief. Veganism attracts protection under [Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights](#) and ethical veganism is a [protected characteristic](#) for the purposes of the British Equality Act 2010.

Well-planned vegetarian and vegan diets can be nutritious and healthy and this is well recognised by British Nutrition Foundation, The British Dietetic Association, National Health Service (NHS) UK, Dietitians of Canada and Australian Dietary Guidelines. In fact, The British Dietetic Association, confirms that a well-planned vegan diet can be suitable for all ages.

The Plant Based Diet

A plant-based diet is one that focuses on the consumption of fruits, vegetables,

whole grains, beans, nuts and seeds, whilst minimising or avoiding animal-derived and processed foods. There isn't a precise definition of this term, which includes vegan (100% plant-based), vegetarian and flexitarian diets. Most people consider a plant-based diet one where at least 85% of calories are derived from plant foods. There are numerous benefits to eating in this way and it is healthy and safe to do so at all stages of life.

Making the switch to Vegan and/or Plant Based

Many people have been switching to a plant-based or vegan diet for health as well as animal welfare concerns and environmental reasons, and they don't always opt to stop wearing leather shoes or wool, or stop eating honey as a vegan does. They often don't want to stop eating all animal foods or using all products made from animals. However, some eventually switch to a vegan way of life! Many people are motivated to reverse the trend of unhealthy eating that is so pervasive and get more whole foods on their plate. So, the more whole foods eaten the better and this can also be referred to as a "Whole Foods Plant Based Diet" which is a plant-based diet that many folks are now embracing. For example, there are numerous health benefits to eating a whole orange in contrast to just consuming its juice.

International health organisations also recommend plant-based diets for disease prevention, including the American College of Cardiology and the World Cancer Research Fund. The EAT-Lancet commission published a large review of diet and its impact on health. It described the 'planetary health diet' as being optimal and it is one that is more than 85% plant-based with less than 15% of calories recommended from meat and dairy.

Added Bonuses

The following list of benefits are associated with eating a well-planned vegan or plant-based diet:

1. Improved mental health and wellbeing.
2. Can boost memory.
3. Reduced arthritic pain.
4. Improved period pain in women
5. Hormone balancing
6. Reduced risk of Urinary Tract Infections
7. Better body odour
8. Better digestion and bowel movements
9. Lower chances of food poisoning
10. Clearer skin
11. Increased energy
12. Improved blood pressure
13. Lower body mass index (BMI)
14. Manage blood glucose (sugar) levels appropriately.
15. Can help fight seasonal sickness thus help to strengthen the immune system.
16. High in fibre
17. Rich in vitamins
18. Rich in minerals

19. Good fatty acids
20. Excellent antioxidants

The science shows that the more you reduce your intake of animal foods and highly ultra processed foods, the healthier you will be.

REFERENCES:

1. Nutritional Update for Physicians: Pub Med Central - Plant Based Diet, 2013: - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3662288/>
2. Frontiers: Impact of a 3-Months Vegetarian Diet on the Gut Microbiota and Immune Repertoire - 2018: <https://tinyurl.com/yte3hhnr>
3. Pub Med Central - The importance of antioxidants and place in today's scientific and technological studies, 2019: <https://tinyurl.com/255xnwb5>
4. <http://nutritionfacts.org/> - Why Do Plant Based Diets Help Rheumatoid Arthritis:
5. The Effects of Hormones in Dairy Milk Cancer: <https://tinyurl.com/4rvk2xxv>
6. Guideline on primary prevention of cardiovascular disease: <http://tinyurl.com/3vxjnps3>
7. Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT-Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems: <http://tinyurl.com/2wb3s9n2>
8. Foods linked to better brain power: <http://tinyurl.com/4bb6wzff>
9. How food affects brain health: <http://tinyurl.com/bdcs5z3z>
10. Urinary Tract Infections: <http://tinyurl.com/ytejmn5>
11. The BDA: <https://www.bda.uk.com/.../british-dietetic-association...>
12. The British National Health Services - <https://www.nhs.uk/.../how-to-eat-a.../the-vegan-diet/>
13. The Dietitians Association of Australia: <https://dietitiansaustralia.org.au/health.../vegetarian-diet>