



HEALTH TOPIC OF THE WEEK

9/25 - Plant-Based Propaganda

Introduction

Plant-based diets are quite the buzz these days, and marketers are eager to capitalize on the trend. Sales of plant-based food in 2020 grew by 27%—twice as fast as food sales in general, according to data from The Good Food Institute and Plant Based Foods Association. A full 57% of Americans say they buy plant-based alternatives to animal products.

Plant-based diets are promoted as healthier than their meat-eating counterparts. However, existing research doesn't support this claim. There are pros and cons across all dietary preferences—vegan, vegetarian, and meat-eaters. With combined expertise in the food industry and as functional nutritionists, EPT stands ready to address the plant-based philosophy.

2020: plant-based food sales up 27%!
2x general food sales,

Propaganda at Work

The food industry tries hard to influence health and lifestyles. As a result, nutrition science and health research are often distorted. Documentaries such as “What the Health” selectively analyze nutrition research to demonize particular foods and praise a particular diet. While we love to see our clients eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, we really hate to see meat demonized. Unfortunately, plant-based diet propaganda can bring unscientific claims against animal protein.

Perhaps you thought that public agency food recommendations such as MyPlate, The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the EAT-Lancet Commission, and the American Heart Association were made to help people achieve optimal health. Sadly, this isn't reality. These groups have significant conflicts of interest, including stocks and Big Food and Pharma donations. The data they use is often from low-quality studies, and members of these organizations often use vegan and plant-based individuals to “review” all the data.



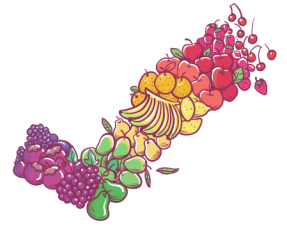
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What does plant-based mean?

Plant-based or plant-forward eating patterns focus on foods primarily from plants. This includes not only fruits and vegetables, but also nuts, seeds, oils, whole grains, legumes, and beans. It doesn't mean that you are vegetarian or vegan and never eat meat or dairy. Rather, you are proportionately choosing more of your foods from plant sources.



The fact that a food is plant-based does not mean it is healthy. For example, French fries and potato chips are plant-based, but they are far from healthy foods. Refined grains, added sugars, and vegan fast-food are all plant-based, too. However, they are not healthy. Fruits, veggies, nuts, and seeds are more nutritionally sound choices.



What is plant-based protein?

Simply, this is protein coming from plant sources. Common sources include soy, pea, corn, potato, peanut, mycoproteins from fungi, hemp and more. Plant proteins are incomplete proteins, meaning they do not include all essential amino acids. Animal proteins, on the other hand, are complete proteins that contain all the essential amino acids. With modern processing technology, companies can now take any plant, process it, and isolate the protein content. The resulting powders are used in beverage blends, bars, and plant-based meats.



Plant based diets can decrease digestive juices. Animal protein stimulates the production of HCL (hydrochloric acid) in your stomach to break down proteins. Proper digestion begins with strong stomach acid production that sets the stage for the pH driven digestive process. Without regular and healthy stimulation of digestive juices, your digestion weakens and fewer nutrients are absorbed in your body.



What are plant-based meats?

These products mimic the taste and texture of traditional meat products. The origin of meat replacements started in the 1960s to 70s, with products produced by Kellogg and Quorn. In recent years, plant-based meats have taken on various shapes and sizes. They imitate popular processed and high-fat meats like sausages, hamburgers, and chicken nuggets. While these products use plant proteins, they can also use texturizers, stabilizers, gums, saturated fats, preservatives, and flavorings to make them look and taste like meat.



What's so great about a plant-based diet?

Plants are key to healthy and sustainable eating. A plant-based diet is nutrient-dense and packed with fiber, healthy fats, protein, vitamins, and minerals. Several observational studies suggest that plant-based and vegetarian diets are associated with a lower risk of obesity, heart disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers.



What does research say about plant-based diets?

Research shows that following a 'flexitarian diet' (increasing plant-based food intake, but not eliminating animal foods) can produce similar health benefits to full plant-based diets including lower blood pressure and reduced diabetes risk.

Summary

Are plants good to eat? Absolutely. Fruits, veggies, legumes, nuts, seeds, herbs and spices are great sources of nutrients and fiber. However, lean animal protein sources are also part of a healthy sustainable diet because they provide complete amino acid profiles.

Those adopting plant-based diets are wise to make sure they're getting sufficient levels of vitamins and minerals, from B12 to omega-3 fatty acids.

Are highly processed plant-based foods good to eat? It's too soon to tell, but any food that is highly processed is questionable. For the average consumer, there is no clear benefit to completely replacing meat.



Ask us about Sustainable Nutrition! Our trainers are also Functional Nutritionists, meaning we take a holistic view on health and nutrition.



This article was contributed by Lynette Jernigan B.S., ASCS, CFS, NASM-CPT & BCS, CFNP, CIMHP, and Director of Nutrition Services

For her bio, please see

<https://www.elitepersonaltrainingandfitnesssolutions.com/lynette-jernigan>

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Additional Resources

The most important and up-to-date scientific evidence on Plant-Based Diet. | Foods and ingredients | Examine

Plant-Based Meats health benefits, dosage, safety, side effects, and supporting evidence. | Supplements | Examine

Corn protein and milk protein similarly stimulate muscle protein synthesis - Study Summary - Examine

How does plant protein intake affect total protein intake, quality, and cost, and nutrient intake? - Study Summary - Examine

A review of research on plant-based meat alternatives: Driving forces, history, manufacturing, and consumer attitudes - He - 2020 - Comprehensive Reviews in Food Science and Food Safety - Wiley Online Library

US Plant Act poised to accelerate alternative protein and propel the burgeoning industry (nutritioninsight.com)

