

HealthMatters

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Plant-based nutrition has exploded in popularity over the past several years.

There are many different types of healthy plant-based diets decreasing animal products/meats and replacing them with health-promoting plants.

Eating a plant-based diet

Plant-based benefits

Eating more plant-based foods can help you lose weight, lower cholesterol and reduce your risk of chronic diseases.

Plants contain thousands of phytochemicals which perform a multitude of beneficial functions:

- Neutralize free radicals
- Reduce inflammation
- Support immunity
- Reduce cancer activity
- Protect against certain diseases
- Improve cholesterol levels

Phytochemicals are possibly the most health promoting and disease fighting nutrients. Plants are the only source of these nutrients as they are completely absent in animals. Fiber is one

type of phytochemical that helps promote health. Fibers found in whole plant food support the gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, and immune systems.

Impact of plants on other chronic diseases

Not only does fiber from plants improve health, increasing fiber intake by just 8g per day can also reduce risk for other chronic diseases.

- 19% reduced risk for heart disease
- 15% reduced risk for type 2 diabetes
- 8% reduced risk for colon cancer
- 7% reduced risk of death from all causes

More than 90% of adults and children in the US do not get the recommended daily dietary fiber. An easy way to get more fiber into your day is to fill at least half of your plate with vegetables and fruits at each meal!

How much is enough fiber

According to the American Heart Association, the daily value for fiber is between 25 and 35 grams per day on a 2,000-calorie diet for adults.

Contact your Everside Health provider today to learn more.

Small steps to healthier plant-based meals

Make a weekly meal plan, then shop.

Plan for incremental change. Maybe start with a fruit at breakfast then add a vegetable with dinner. Once a routine is established, add a second fruit/veggie serving or maybe a salad at lunch. Fill at least half of your plate with salad greens and cooked or raw vegetables.

Reach for healthy fats

Add small amounts of nuts, nut butters, seeds, olives, avocados, tahini, and olive oil or other plant oils in your daily meals.

Include whole grains

Try a side of barley, quinoa, brown rice or any other whole grain. Make your own whole grain flour by blending oatmeal in a blender!

Get creative with prep

Steam, broil, roast, blend or sauté. Mix up a smoothie, simmer some soup or toss a salad... it all counts!

Use the stealth approach

Sneak extra veggies into salads, soups and casseroles. Add berries and other fruit to whole-grain breakfast cereals, salads and snacks. Top off your meals with a sprinkle of sesame seeds, chopped nuts, and/or chopped fresh herbs to boost the flavor and add some more plant-based health benefits. Small changes to improve your health can lead to big results!

Want to learn more?

Contact your provider to discuss your individual exercise and eating habits today!

Sources:

[Plant-Based Diets: A Physician's Guide | PMC](#), Accessed 12/29/2021

[Carbohydrate quality and human health: a series of systematic reviews and meta-analyses | Journal Lancet](#), accessed 12/29/2021

[The Five Food Groups | Forks over Knives](#), accessed 12/29/2021

[The power of a plant-based diet for heart health | Mayo Clinic](#), accessed 12/29/2021

The five food groups in a plant-based diet

Fruits

Including apples, bananas, grapes, blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, pears, oranges, kiwifruit, pineapple, etc.

Vegetables

Plenty of veggies including peppers, corn, broccoli, spinach, kale, peas, collard greens, butternut squash, etc.

Tubers

Root vegetables like potatoes, carrots, radishes, jicama, parsnips, sweet potatoes, beets, etc.

Whole grains

Grains, cereals, and other starches in their whole form, such as quinoa, brown rice, millet, whole wheat, steel cut oats, hulled barley, farro, popcorn, etc.

Legumes

Black beans, lentils, chickpeas, black-eyed peas, green peas, split peas, etc.

Did You Know? | Plants have protein too! Protein rich foods in the plant kingdom include legumes, nuts and nut butters, seeds and seed butters, soy foods, and intact whole grains.