

Why 'eat more plants'?

The quality of our diet has a huge impact on our health and wellbeing, and it is widely accepted that many medical conditions, including heart disease, diabetes and mental health problems, could be prevented improved, and in some cases, cured by a change in diet.

Although we are all different in terms of our food preferences, intolerances and health goals, evidence shows that eating a more whole-food plant-based diet benefits everyone.

When people make enough of this kind of change to their diet they usually notice

- ✓ **feeling better: mood, concentration, energy, sense of enjoyment less constipation, aches and pains**
- ✓ **sleeping better**
- ✓ **shift towards healthy weight**

One of the main ways we get these benefits is because all the different fibres, colours and flavours in whole plant foods support a healthy range of gut bugs in our '**microbiome**'. This then helps our bowel function properly, regulates our immune system, calms inflammation and gives us a more steady energy supply.

What can be changed for the better?

Compared to a 'Standard Western Diet', **ALL healthier diets have these things in common.**

- more '**plant-foods**' that have been processed as little as possible
- more **fibre**, from a variety of whole plant foods - vegetables, pulses, whole grains, and fruit.
- less sugar, white flour and other **refined** 'carbohydrates'.

In addition there is widespread agreement that

- most of us eat much more meat (poultry and red meats) than is good for our health.
- most of us consume too much salt,
- most of us consume too much processed oil - mainly from fried and processed foods

The healthiest, longest-lived populations in the world eat a whole-food, plant-based diet

- At least 90% of their calories are from fresh and whole plant-foods.

How?

- Making effective changes to our diets **means creating/establishing new habits, not 'going on a diet'**.
- Research suggests that whilst it takes around 3 weeks to get used to new foods, it takes 2 months to establish a new habit.
- It can be really helpful to think through: what helped you last time you changed a habit? And what would you like to do differently this time?
- Useful goals are **realistic and achievable** - if you are making the right small changes every week, you will work towards achieving a larger goal, such as losing weight, or coming off blood pressure tablets. For example 'I will try 5 vegetables I have never eaten before' or 'I will stop eating after 7pm'.
- See the 'top tips' on the next page - some of these could be useful goals
- If you prefer to make big changes remember most people need really good planning and/or support to see it through.
- Share your ongoing progress with a friend, Health Connector or other professional who you speak to regularly.
- Seek out helpful tools to keep you on track. You can speak to a Health Connector who can offer advice, for example links to downloadable apps or a food and mood diary.

Top tips: ideas and advice - take your pick!

- ✓ **Set** realistic, achievable goals each week
- ✓ **Plan** your meals in advance - including how many will be plant-based meals.
- ✓ **Prepare** your own take-away meals for when you are at work or away from home.

- ➔ **Think Drink:** If you drink fizzy sweet drinks, juices (fruit or vegetable) or alcohol you can change these for any unsweetened drink such as water or herbal 'teas'.
- ➔ **Snack Attack:** swap processed snacks like crisps, biscuits, cereal bars and cakes for fresh fruit or nuts.
- ➔ **Eat Early:** There is a massive difference between the way our bodies deal with the foods we eat earlier versus later in the day. It is better to eat most of your calories before the early afternoon.
- ➔ Preparing food the night before really helps with this.

Ideas for Creating Variety

- ❖ **Not just "fruit and veg":** remember there are 5 kinds of fresh and whole plant-foods: **vegetables, pulses (beans, peas and lentils), whole grains, fruit/berries, and nuts/seeds.**
- ❖ **Magic number 5:** eat at least one whole or fresh plant food from each of the 5 groups each day
- ❖ **Magic number 5:** eat at least 5 kinds of 'veg' a day, but not the same 5 every day!
- ❖ **Magic number 5:** there are at least 5 types of 'veg' - leaves (salad leaves, spinach, cabbage, kale), flowers (broccoli, cauliflower), fruits (courgettes, runner beans) roots (parsnips, carrots, potatoes), and mushrooms.
- ❖ **Magic number 5:** eat 5 different types of fresh fruit, especially berries, a week.
- ❖ **Magic number 35:** People with the most healthy microbiomes eat 35 or more different unique plants each week. This includes things all the 5 groups: veg, pulses, wholegrains, fruits and nuts/seeds. You could find out how many you eat now by keeping a score, and set yourself a target for a number each week. How early in the week do you hit your target?
- ❖ **Not all "pulses" are weird:** baked beans, green peas, the chickpeas in humous, and peanuts are all 'pulses'. **Pulses are the best swap-in for red meat.**

Where to find Practical Information and Recipes

Books:

Jack Monroe's books, particularly *Vegan(ish)*

Practical advice, and Jack **always** keeps a close eye on the budget.

Forks Over Knives: The Cookbook, by Del Sroufe. 300 reliable recipes for £10!

Rupi Aujla: The Doctors' Kitchen inspiring and delicious Whole-food Plant-Based recipes

Websites

thedoctorskitchen.com

cookingonabootstrap.com

forksoverknives.com

plantstrong.com

Further Questions?

See our [Common Questions and Concerns](#) leaflet for answers to questions like :

Does this need to be expensive? Will beans make me fart? and What about fish and essential oils?

See ["Processed" What does that Mean?](#) to learn more about harmful food processing