

The Hidden Dangers of Going Vegan



By Lynn Allison | Tuesday, 25 September 2018 09:34 AM EDT

Diets that limit or exclude meat, dairy products and eggs used to be on the fringe and were seen as fads. But according to the Food Revolution Network, millennials are the driving force of a worldwide shift away from consuming animal products. In addition, Nestle, the largest food company in the world, predicts that plantbased foods will continue to grow and “this trend is here to stay.”

However, some nutritionists say that there are some caveats to going vegan.

“A vegan diet can be beneficial in many ways, involving a higher than average fruit, vegetable and fiber intake with limited or no processed foods,” [Laura Cipullo](#), R.D., founder of Whole Nutrition Services and a bestselling author, tells Newsmax. “However, the more restrictive the diet, the more challenging it is to get adequate nutrition.”

According to [Cipullo](#), eating a plant-based diet provides a “plethora of antioxidants such as vitamins C and A to fight free radical damage to the cells.”

Vegans also tend to focus on eating dark leafy greens such as spinach and kale and enjoying healthy fats such as avocados and nuts which may help prevent diabetes, says the certified diabetes educator.

“Physical activity combined with a plant-based diet are doubly protective against diabetes and heart disease,” she explains. “Vegan diets have been shown to lower blood glucose levels in three months.”

However, despite these benefits, vegans who do not eat dairy or eggs as well as meat and fish may suffer from specific nutritional deficiencies including low levels vitamin B12, calcium, iron, zinc and riboflavin.

Recently, Harvard Medical School announced the results of a Chinese study that said people who ate an egg a day had an 18% lower risk of dying from cardiovascular disease and a whopping 28% lower risk of experiencing a deadly hemorrhagic stroke compared to folks who didn’t eat eggs.

“Additionally, a low intake of quality protein and calories can make you constantly hungry so that you tend to overeat,” says **Cipullo**. “The overeating may spiral out of control leading to an eating disorder.”

In order to get a variety of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants include both raw and cooked foods. For example, make sure you are getting enough lycopene by eating both cooked and raw tomatoes. Aim for more potassium by including both white and sweet potatoes. Include cooked dried beans in your diet that are rich in folate.

Here are more tips:

1. **Strategic snacking.** When you don't have sufficient dietary protein, the carbohydrates consumed reach the bloodstream faster, causing insulin levels to spike and then crash. To make sure that you have enough energy on a vegan or even a vegetarian diet that allows dairy and eggs, snack on protein throughout the day to ensure the carbs are absorbed into the bloodstream at a steady rate. Good choices are raw nuts, hummus, lentils, seitan and tempeh.
2. **Stock up on sun and supplements.** Vegan and vegetarian diets run the huge risk of having inadequate vitamin B12 which is essential for red blood cell synthesis, and vitamin D which is typically not found in plant sources. Make sure that you are exposed to at least 15 minutes of sunlight daily and take a B12 supplement to overcome this potential deficiency. You also want to ensure you're getting enough calcium and iron through vegan-friendly options like almonds, dark leafy green vegetables, and green beans. Otherwise, you run the risk of anemia and other nutritional deficiencies.
3. **Don't be fake.** Steer clear of overly processed soy veggie burgers, “unchicken fingers,” and other “pretend” meats. They contain artificial fillers and are high in sodium. If you do choose to consume soy, limit yourself to one serving per day and stick to whole foods such as tempeh, tofu, miso and edamame beans.

4. **Oh my omega!** One of the worst downsides to a vegan diet is the lack of omega-3 fatty acids found in fatty fish. Omega-3 fatty acids fight inflammation and play a positive role in fighting anxiety and depression. You can use supplements or eat more algae-based products like chlorella or spirulina. Flax seeds, flax seed oil and walnuts are also beneficial.
5. **Be careful with carbs.** As a vegan, you'll need all the complex carbohydrates you can get. Reach for whole wheat pasta, barley and millet. Avoid quick fixes that could be vegan but are unhealthy, such as cookies and potato chips.

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