

## Message from the Parish Nurses

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### PLANT-BASED DIET

#### (WHAT IS A PLANT-BASED DIET?)

**“EAT YOUR VEGGIES” might top the list of the most common thing that your mother said at the dinner table when you were a child. Passed down through generations, it turns out those three words are more than a simple parental plea. This was and still is wise dietary advice. Scientific research shows that a plant-based diet can reduce the risk of heart disease, certain types of cancer, type 2 diabetes, and other major illnesses. Changing your nutrition is a powerful way to live longer, help the environment, and reduce your risk of getting sick.**

#### WHAT IS A PLANT-BASED DIET?

It's delicious! A plant-based diet is a very simple one. It consists of avoiding all meat, poultry fish, dairy, and eggs. What you do eat are the very best foods that Mother Nature offers:

- **Fruits:** any type of fruit including apples, bananas, blueberries, oranges, strawberries, citrus fruits, etc.
- **Vegetables:** plenty of veggies including broccoli, cauliflower, peppers, peas, kale, corn, lettuce, etc.
- **Tubers:** root vegetables like potatoes, carrots, parsnips, sweet potatoes, beets, etc.
- **Whole Grains:** grains, cereals and other starches in their whole form, such as barley, millet, oats, quinoa, brown rice, buckwheat, whole wheat, bulger (cracked wheat), etc. Even popcorn is a whole grain.
- **Legumes:** kidney beans, chickpeas, cannellini beans, black beans, lentils, peas, etc.

#### Enjoy in Moderation:

- Whole nuts & seeds, nut/seed butter (walnuts, pumpkin seeds, tahini, almond butter)
- Tofu (soy) and tempeh (soybean cake)
- Whole-grain flours & bread
- Plant based milks (rice, soy, oat, almond, cashew, coconut, hemp milks)

#### Avoid or Minimize:

- Meat, poultry, seafood
- Eggs
- Dairy products
- Refined sweeteners
- Oils
- Bleached flours, white bread & white pasta
- White rice

### WHAT A PLANT-BASED DIET ISN'T

It isn't a diet of vegetables only. While leafy vegetables are an important part of a plant-based diet, they don't contain enough calories to sustain you. Consider you would need to eat almost 16 pounds of cooked kale to get 2,000 calories! Not eating enough calories leads to decreased energy level, feelings of deprivation, cravings, and even binges. Foods high in calories are: Nuts, Soy Products, Grains, Fruits and Vegetables.

### ON A PLANT-BASED DIET

#### WILL I GET ENOUGH PROTEIN?

One of the most common myths about a plant-based diet is that you won't get enough protein. This is simply not true. When you eat a diet based on fruit, vegetables, tubers, whole grain, and legumes you will get enough protein in your diet.

#### WILL I GET ENOUGH CALCIUM?

Like iron, magnesium, and copper, calcium is a mineral. It is found in the soil, where it is absorbed into the roots of plants. Animals get their calcium from consuming these calcium-rich plants. So even though we are all conditioned to believe that calcium comes from milk and dairy products, the real source of calcium richness is the earth. On a plant-based diet you will get plenty of calcium.

#### WILL I GET ENOUGH OMEGA-3s?

Some fats are necessary in our diet. Consuming oil, fish and processed foods as a means to get these, however, is unnecessary, and even harmful. Every whole plant has fat, and we don't need any more than what naturally occurs in a low-fat plant-based diet.

#### WILL I GET ENOUGH CARBOHYDRATES?

If you eat plant-based diet foods like fruit, whole grains, and vegetables, you'll thrive on a high-carbohydrate diet. As an added bonus, these foods are high in fiber. Eating high-fiber foods almost always reduces the overall number of calories consumed, which assist with weight loss.

#### WILL I GET ENOUGH VITAMINE B12?

Although plant-based diets are full of other vitamins and minerals, they are generally devoid of vitamin B12. Vitamin B12 is naturally found in animal foods or bacteria. You would need to take an oral supplement.

More information can be found on the second page by going to the St. Agnes website.

By Barbara Mueller, RN, Faith Community Nurse

Sources: Books and websites

Forks Over Knives The Plant-Based Way To Health

<https://www.forksoverknives.com>

The film "Forks Over Knives" can be seen on NETFLIX Prevent & Reverse Heart Disease by Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn

[www.dresselstyn.com](http://www.dresselstyn.com)

**Visit:** [www.StAgnesShepherdstown.org](http://www.StAgnesShepherdstown.org) for **“What Happens When You Stop Eating Meat?”**. **Click on:** Parish Health Newsletter to read both pages of the newsletter.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU STOP EATING MEAT?

**People go plant-based for lots of reasons. These include losing weight, feeling more energetic, reducing the risk of heart disease, decreasing the number of pills they take ... there are dozens of great reasons! Check out these other benefits you can expect when eating a plant-based diet.**

### 1. You'll reduce inflammation in your body.

If you are eating meat, cheese, and highly processed foods, chances are you have elevated levels of inflammation in your body. Short-term inflammation (such as after an injury) is normal and necessary. Chronic inflammation has been linked to the development of atherosclerosis, heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, and autoimmune diseases.

In contrast, plant-based diets are naturally anti-inflammatory, because they are high in fiber and antioxidants. They are much lower in inflammatory triggers like saturated fat and endotoxins (toxins released from bacteria commonly found in animal foods.)

### 2. Your blood cholesterol levels will plummet.

Elevated blood cholesterol is a key risk factor for heart disease and strokes. Saturated fat – primarily found in meat, poultry, cheese and other animal products – is a major driver of our blood cholesterol levels.

Plant-based diets reduce blood cholesterol because they tend to be very low in saturated fat and they contain zero cholesterol. Plant-based diets are high in fiber, which further reduces blood cholesterol levels.

### 3. You'll give your microbiome a makeover.

The trillions of microorganisms living in our bodies are called the microbiome. They help us digest our food, turn genes on and off, and keep our gut tissue healthy. The fiber in plant foods promotes the growth of “friendly” bacteria in our gut.

Fiber-poor diets (such as those that are high in dairy, eggs, and meat) can foster the growth of disease-promoting bacteria. Studies have shown they play a role in obesity, diabetes, heart disease, inflammatory bowel disease, autoimmune disease and some types of cancer.

### 4. You'll dramatically reduce your chances of getting type 2 diabetes.

An estimated 38 percent of Americans have prediabetes, a precursor to type 2 diabetes. Animal protein, especially red and processed meat, have been shown in study after study to increase the risk of type 2 diabetes. Why would meat cause type 2 diabetes? Several reasons: animal fat, animal-based (hem) iron, and nitrate preservatives in meat have been found to damage pancreatic cells, worsen inflammation, cause weight gain, and impair the way our insulin function.

You will dramatically lessen your chances of getting type 2 diabetes by leaving animal products off of your plate and eating a diet based on whole plant food. This is especially true if you eat whole grains, which are highly protective against type 2 diabetes. Carbs actually protect you from diabetes! Also, a plant-based diet can improve or even reverse your diabetes if you have already been diagnosed with it.

### 5. You'll change how your genes work.

Scientists have made the remarkable discovery that environment and lifestyle factors can turn genes on and off. For example, the antioxidants and other nutrients we eat in whole plant foods can change gene expression to optimize how our cells repair damaged DNA.

**Source: Excerpts from Article (7 Things That Happen When You Stop Eating Meat) by Michelle McMacken, MD**  
<https://www.forksoverknives.com>

## SUPPLEMENT NEEDED

On a plant-based diet when not eating any meat, poultry, fish, or dairy products you will need to take an oral supplement of vitamin B12. The usual dose for the average person is 2.4 micrograms (mcg) a day. Although plant-based diets are full of other vitamins and minerals they are generally void of Vitamin B12, but fortified breakfast cereals and some nutritional yeast products contain vitamin B12.

**Source:** <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/vitaminb12-healthprofessional>

**If you aren't interested in going 100 percent plant-based, how about giving it a try for a week!**

By Barbara Mueller, RN, Faith Community Nurse