

The Power of Plants

THE LATEST BUZZWORD for an optimal meal plan is a plant-based diet, one that focuses on plants, such as grains, legumes, vegetables, fruits, nuts and seeds, rather than a diet of animal products like meat, fish, poultry, eggs and dairy. While plant-based diets are not new, the fact that the trend is catching on *is* new, according to Reed Mangels, Ph.D., R.D., Nutrition Advisor of The Vegetarian Resource Group. She says, “More people are interested in plant-based eating and it goes along with the movement to eat more locally grown vegetables and fruits.” Plant-based eating doesn’t mean giving up animal foods completely. The U.S. Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, the group that reviews nutrition science research in order to make recommendations for the 2010 Dietary Guidelines, defines a plant-based diet as one that “emphasizes plant foods.” Thus, plant-based eating



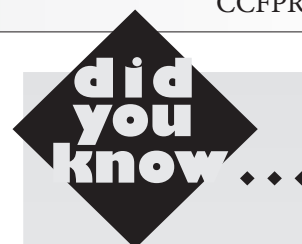
covers a spectrum of eating styles, from a strict vegan diet with no animal products to a varied diet that contains some animal products but includes *more* plant foods.

Scientists have observed that the “Western diet,” the typical dietary pattern in the U.S. that is high in meat, fat, saturated fat and sodium and low in fiber, is linked with an increased risk of chronic

diseases, such as cardiovascular disease. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines report a number of advantages associated with a vegetarian-style eating pattern, including lower levels of obesity, a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, and lower mortality.

Why is a plant-based diet so healthy? It makes sense that when cutting back on animal products in favor of more plant foods, the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol eaten is naturally reduced.

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- ▶ In blind taste tests of more than 1900 children and adults, the Center for Science in the Public Interest found that 95% liked the taste of 1% or fat free (skim) milk.
- ▶ Reduced fat (2%) milk is not considered low in fat. One cup has as much heart-unhealthy fat as 3 strips of bacon. Only 1% and fat free (skim) milk are low in fat.
- ▶ Switching to 1% or fat free (skim) milk is one of the easiest ways for children to get the calcium and vitamin D they need, while reducing their saturated fat intake and the risk of heart disease.
- ▶ Heart disease may not show up until adulthood, but the beginnings of clogged arteries, an early sign of heart disease, are seen in children.

Source: Center for Science in the Public Interest

Quotable Quotes

“A three-year-old gave this reaction to her Thanksgiving dinner: “I don’t like the turkey, but I like the bread he ate.”

— Author unknown

INSIDE:

- ◆ Healthy Changes to Federal Regulations
- ◆ Fun with Scarves Activity

- ◆ Recipes
- ◆ Food Funny

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Eating more whole grains, legumes, vegetables, fruits, seeds and nuts, increases health-promoting nutrients, such as fiber, vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients. Many vitamins and phytonutrients act as antioxidants to protect body cells against damage. A diverse diet, rich in a variety of plant foods that contain a range of bioactive compounds, offers the best eating strategy for optimal health.

Make Friends with Plants

It's not as hard as you think; even if you're a meat lover, you can still make positive changes in your diet to emphasize more plant foods.

- 1. Look at your current food intake.** Keep a one-week diet record and see how many times you eat meat. Where do you have room to cut back? Create a personal goal for how many meatless meals you want to eat each week.
- 2. Change your mind set.** Don't think of meat as the center of the plate. When you're planning your menu, start with the vegetable and whole grain components; make them the stars of your plate.
- 3. Use meat as a "flavoring".** You can easily cut down on your intake of meat products while emphasizing plant foods if you use meat as a flavoring instead of as the main event. This eating style is the basis of many ethnic dishes, such as curries, stir-fries, stews and pasta dishes that are flavored with a small portion of beef, pork, chicken or fish with lots of vegetables.
- 4. Start the day with plant foods.** Breakfast is one of the easiest meals to skip meat. Skip the bacon and sausage and enjoy cold or hot cereal with fruit and lowfat milk.
- 5. Get cooking.** Choose an interesting, meatless recipe to try one or more nights a week.
- 6. Keep it simple.** Plant-based meals don't have to be complicated; consider bean burritos, meatless chili or lentil stew.
- 7. Convert your favorite dishes.** Add less meat and more vegetables to your favorite dishes. Try pizza with broccoli, onions, basil and cheese instead of high fat pepperoni or sausage for a meatless version.
- 8. Keep it whole.** Use whole grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts and seeds and avoid refined carbohydrates such as white flour and sugar. Plan meals around fresh vegetables and fruits in season, whole grains like quinoa and whole grain couscous and legumes such as lentils and beans.
- 9. Rethink how you shop.** Your first stop in the grocery store should be the produce section to stock up on a variety of seasonal produce. Or, visit the farmers' market for locally grown, fresh, seasonal produce.
- 10. Try ethnic foods.** Visit ethnic restaurants, such as Mexican, Indian, Thai and Vietnamese and observe how dishes are prepared with less meat.



A healthy plant-based diet is a trend we can all embrace for better nutrition and better health. For more information and ideas to get started visit www.meatlessmonday.com

— Adapted from *Environmental Nutrition*,
Sharon Palmer, R.D. July 2011.

KIDS' HEALTH & SAFETY

Healthy Changes to Federal Regulations Take Effect October 1, 2011

Milk in the Child Care Food Program

In accordance with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines all children 2 years of age and over must be served lowfat (1%) milk or fat free (skim) milk. *Reduced fat (2%) milk and whole milk may not be served and will not be reimbursed.*

- As recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics and supported by the California Department of Education, providers should continue to serve whole milk to children 1 year of age until their 2nd birthday. There is *no* change in this best practice.
- A medical statement, signed by a recognized medical authority is required for any deviations from this policy, i.e. children 2 years and over on whole milk.

A parent may now request non-dairy beverage substitutions such as soy milk in writing, without providing a physician's medical statement. *The beverage must be nutritionally equivalent to milk and meet the nutritional standards for fortification of calcium, protein, vitamin A, vitamin D and other nutrients to levels found in cow's milk.* The request must identify the medical or other special dietary need that restricts the diet of the child. Keep a copy of this signed and dated request on file for your records and send the original to the sponsor.



Water Availability in the Child Care Food Program

The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans do not establish a daily minimum intake for water consumption, but recommend that water be consumed daily.

- Throughout the day, including at meal times, water should be made available to children to drink upon request, but does not have to be available to children to self-serve.
- Water is not part of the reimbursable meal and may not be served at a main meal in lieu of fluid milk. If a child requests water at a mealtime it must be served in a cup separately from the milk, so that milk is also served.
- Providers are encouraged to serve water with snacks when no other beverage is served.
- Water can be made available to children in a variety of ways which include but are not limited to: having cups available next to the kitchen faucet, having water pitchers and cups set out or simply providing water to a child when it is requested.
- Children who lack the ability to ask for water should still be offered a drink of water at regular times both inside and outside and especially after vigorous play and in hot weather.

— *Nutrition Services Division Management Bulletin*

A New Health and Safety Code related to nutritious beverages is scheduled to go into effect January 1, 2012. **All** licensed child care centers and family child care homes in California will be required to comply with the milk and water regulations and the following beverage provisions:

- Limit juice to no more than one 4–6 ounce serving of 100% juice per day.
- Serve no beverages with added sweeteners, either natural or artificial, for example juice drinks, soda, diet soda, sports drinks, etc.

Vegetarian Skillet Dinner

(1 Basic Formula with 3 Variations)

- Olive oil 1 Tbsp
- Onion, chopped 1
- Celery, chopped 1 stalk
- Carrot, chopped 1
- Tomatoes, petite diced 1 (14.5 ounce) can
- Vegetable or chicken broth 4 cups
- Protein: (See options below)
- Grain: (See options below)
- Seasoning: (See options below)
- Parsley, chopped ¼ cup
- Salt and pepper to taste

1. Heat oil in skillet over medium high heat. Add celery, onion and carrot and sauté until tender, about 5 minutes.
2. Add the desired seasoning, the bean you choose, the rice or pasta, and finally the tomatoes and broth. Bring to a boil, then cover and reduce heat to simmer 20 minutes. For Curried Lentils and Brown Rice, cover and cook 45 minutes.
3. Stir in parsley and season to taste with salt and pepper.

Variations

1. Pasta e Fagioli

- Protein: 2 (15.5 ounce) cans cannellini beans, drained
- Grain: 2 cups Ditalini or other small pasta, uncooked
- Seasoning: 1 Tbsp Italian seasoning

2. Cajun Pinto Beans and Rice

- Protein: 2 (15.5 ounce) cans pinto beans
- Grain: 1 cup white rice, uncooked
- Seasoning: 4 tsp Cajun/Creole seasoning and ½ tsp dried thyme

3. Curried Lentils and Brown Rice

- Protein: 1 cup dried lentils
- Grain: 1 cup brown rice, uncooked
- Seasoning: 2 tsp curry powder, few drops of Tabasco sauce

Each recipe yields: 6 servings

Meets requirement for grains/breads and protein/meat alternate

— Adapted from USA Weekend

Food Funny Q: What kind of beans have landed on the moon?
 A: Human Beans!

Activity Corner

FUN WITH SCARVES

Opportunities to enhance physical activities can begin with a simple scarf. Scarves made from squares of light weight (mesh or net) material, have many creative uses in the hands of a child.

- A single scarf can be tossed into the air, and, with practice, caught with the other hand. Children will also enjoy catching them on their foot, elbow, shoulder, knee and head!
- Two scarves can be tossed into the air at the same time and both of them caught before they touch the ground.
- Scarves can be used for props when dancing and twirling. Let children try using one scarf to begin, and then give them one for each hand. With slow music they can make long, sweeping movements and with fast music they can shake them like a pom-pom.

Inexpensive, reusable scarves can be added to a variety of physical activities. Let imaginations run wild!

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