

TIPS TO TRANSITION INTO VEGANISM



More and more people are considering a healthier way of life to lose weight, get fit, prevent illness and save the planet. One of the most effective ways to do this is to adopt a plant-based diet. Even with the best intentions, changing the way you eat can be hard.

Here are some tips that can make it just a little bit easier.

Do it for yourself, not animals

Some people go vegan thinking that they're doing it to help animals who are suffering in farms and slaughterhouses. This is admirable but you need to also think of your own health too!

Do your research

If you're thinking about becoming vegan then you should do your research first! A vegan diet can be deficient in some nutrients such as Vitamin B12 and calcium. To overcome this, research what foods need to be included in your diet to make sure you are getting a full quota of all the nutrients you need. There are loads of great websites out there with advice on this, including which food items you need to buy. Plus, there are absolutely loads of recipes, so there is absolutely no excuse to be short of meal ideas.

Prepare yourself for the downsides.

Knowing what the pitfalls are likely to be, ahead of time, is definitely something you need to be aware of. One thing many vegans complain about is missing a bacon buttie/sandwich! So planning how you can overcome this before it happens is good advice. There are meat substitutes for things like bacon, sausage and burgers. Is eating substitutes the route you want to go down or do you want to just eat natural foods? In this case, think what would be a great alternative to bacon when the craving hits you.

Try Meatless Mondays

If you do it gradually and it goes wrong, then it won't be as bad as it would be if you changed everything at once. Meat-free Monday is an easy transition into veganism because one day isn't going to make a huge difference. And it is better than doing nothing at all. If you work during the week then you will probably not even notice not eating meat on that one day. This is a good transition for those who want to ease themselves into veganism without sacrificing their weekend social life (since not every restaurant offers vegan food).

Once you have tried once a week for a while you could step it up to one week a month. Then there is always Veganuary, when lots of people will be doing it at the same time. Why not see if a friend will do it with you. Then you can support and encourage each other. Having peer support and accountability will make you more likely to succeed (1).

Keep your new diet in mind when eating out

Eating out is something you need to consider if you are a social butterfly. Is your regular restaurant vegan-friendly? One of the easiest cuisines to find vegan food is Indian (2). Chinese restaurants also cater for vegans (3). But if you are giving a dinner party there are lots of alternatives to Chinese dishes (4). If Italian is your thing then pizza and pasta are the perfect bases for lots of yummy vegetables.

Search the internet for vegan-friendly restaurants in your area and then research what they have on their menus. You don't need to rely on salad, when dining out, which could be very boring and repetitive!

With more and more people turning to a vegan diet, specialist vegan restaurants are popping up in most towns. The perfect excuse to introduce your meat-eating friends to some professionally-prepared vegan food.

Don't beat yourself up about slip-ups

If you do accidentally eat something with an animal product then don't beat yourself up over it! It happens and nobody's perfect so forgive yourself and move on. You are in this for the long haul and habits formed slowly and steadily are much more likely to stick! (5)

Consider if it's worth it

If you want to give up meat for ethical reasons, it's not just about the food you put in your mouth. There are other products made from animal by-products. These include the obvious things like leather bags shoes and belts. But have you considered that there are animal components to many beauty products? Even if the latest "miracle" face cream doesn't contain anything sourced from an animal, it may have been tested on one of these poor creatures (6).

Understand what veganism is and isn't

Some people become vegan with the expectation that they can now eat unlimited amounts of cookies or crisps because they're now 'vegan-friendly'. This is not true or realistic. Oreos are still full of fat, salt and sugar, and despite the hype are actually not vegan (7). This means that you should only have them once in a while, just like other snacks.

There are plenty of healthy alternatives to your favourite foods so instead of cutting everything out completely, try swapping things around so you replace the bad stuff with good stuff. Eating too many processed carbs can make you gain weight whether you are vegan or not.

Visit a farm

As well as reading up on animal rights, you could visit a farm to see what actually happens to the animals that are raised for meat and dairy. You are likely to find this eye-opening, shocking and even upsetting. But it's crucial to think about where your food comes from. This may be enough to give you the push you need to change to a vegan lifestyle. Even if you decide to stay omnivore, it's good to know where the steak on your plate has originated.

Prepare yourself for bad comments

Finally, be aware that people will almost always be judgemental when they find out about your new lifestyle. It is human nature. So prepare yourself for negative comments such as 'what about protein', 'I could never give up my juicy steak' etc... You may wish to consider the opinions of your friends and family. After all these are the people that care about you. Ultimately remember that you're doing this for yourself. It's your body, your life and your choice!

Armed with these hints and tips, you now have more ideas about how to transition to a plant-based diet.

References

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