

VEGANISM: COMMON MYTHS DEBUNKED



It's bland, it's too expensive, I won't get enough protein. Some of the myths (read that as excuses) that surround the vegan diet. So let's see if we can blow some of these out of the water.

Myth #1 – Eating healthy costs more

One of the misconceptions is that eating healthy will hurt you in your wallet. This is not the case, especially when we are talking about veganism. In fact, I'm a bit confused as to how this excuse came to be as 8oz of steak costs dollars per pound yet beans or mushrooms are cents/pennies per pound.

The main components of a vegan diet are fruits and vegetables; along with grains, legumes, nuts and seeds. These are all ingredients that can be found cheaply in bulk at most food stores or supermarkets. Then there are vegan alternatives to meat products like veggie burgers and soy hot dogs which are also cost-effective. They don't spoil quickly and they're healthy for you so they're also good investments.

Milk alternatives like soy milk can cost just as much as cow's milk but provide health benefits like calcium which is important for strong bones. This benefit outweighs the additional cost for many people. Soy products often provide high amounts of protein so they may be more expensive than less healthy foods but their nutritional value makes them well worth it. People who buy tofu regularly would probably spend more money on meat if they didn't eat soy products.

Healthier options that are vegan tend to be cheaper than eating meat because fruits and vegetables maintain their nutritional value even when they're frozen or canned instead of fresh.

It's easy to eat a healthy, nutritional and affordable vegan diet without spending too much money or investing too much time in cooking complicated dishes. Eating vegan can save you time when you're shopping by allowing you to buy everything you need from one place like a grocery store or supermarket instead of searching several different stores for ingredients that might not even be sold there.

Most fruits and vegetables are delicious eaten raw so you get additional savings by not using electricity or gas to cook meals.

Too expensive? It's more expensive to be sick in the future than to invest in better food today. Think of it as another form of health insurance (1).

Myth #2 – a plant-based diet is bland

One of the basic tastes is umami (the others being salty, sweet, bitter and sour). Humans love umami because it makes our mouths water for more food. The reason humans crave meat is because it contains glutamate which is where the umami taste comes from (2).

But there are also many vegan sources of glutamate, which give the same taste sensation. Grains have high concentrations of free glutamic acid which forms monosodium glutamate naturally. Other foods that contain significant amounts of glutamate are soy sauce and fermented bean paste (miso). Plants that have the umami taste we crave are mushrooms, tomatoes, and sea vegetables; especially kombu (3).

One great source of the umami taste is yeast extract also known as Marmite or Vegemite. This delicious spread can be eaten on toast or added to pasta to satisfy the desire for umami. As it also has a salty taste it can be added to soups, stews, sauces and casseroles for a double whammy of flavour.

The use of spices and condiments like salt and pepper can make any meal delicious without adding expensive ingredients like meat or seafood. It's easy to create flavourful dishes with these simple ingredients. They last for ages and you only need a little bit so they save you money too.

The other thing worth bearing in mind is that nothing tastes as good as saving the planet and the lives of countless animals.

Myth #3 - you need to eat meat and eggs to get enough protein.

One of the first things most people mention when talking about a vegan diet is whether you can get enough protein or not.

Protein is an essential macronutrient that helps keep your body functioning properly. It provides building blocks for muscle growth and repair (after exercise or injury), making it particularly important to include in a healthy diet! There's a whole lot of protein in plant-based foods. If you're vegan and are looking to maintain your health while staying active - don't worry! There's plenty of protein in many vegetables like kale, beans such as soybean sprouts which contain about 5 grams per serving and lentils have 4g/cup.

Protein quality is important and despite the quantity of protein in meat being higher than in plants, vegetables pack a punch too. We're talking quality over

quantity. Vegan protein is varied and delicious including tofu, legumes, nuts, seeds, tempeh and edamame (4).

The reality of eating more animal protein is that we are suffering from more heart disease, cancer, diabetes than ever before. This is linked to the cholesterol in meat – something vegetables don't have (5).

Another point worth bearing in mind is when was the last time you heard of someone having a protein deficiency in the western world? (6) We eat twice the amount that we should eat on a daily basis. What we are not eating enough of, is fibre. That's the problem! My apologies for this but a lack of fibre is a million dollar constipation problem (7). We need fibre (30g per day) to stop us from getting bowel cancer. That is way more important than worrying about not getting enough protein. Fibre only exists in plants. You won't find any in meat.

Anyone that says you will have a protein deficiency on a plant based diet is talking rubbish. By way of proof, the biggest, strongest animals on the planet - think elephant, rhino, giraffe - only eat plants. I rest my case m'lord!

Myth #4 - You don't get enough nutrients on a plant based diet.

What a load of tosh!! I can't believe this is actually something people believe. There are actually way more nutrients in plants. Pound for pound they are more nutrient-dense. I find it incredible that someone living on a fast food diet with all the nutrients processed out of it can challenge me on a diet full of vegetables (1).

Thinking about it, our ancestors did not have a single processed food in their diet. They ate fresh fruit and vegetables and the odd animal that they managed to catch. If our ancestors had eaten fast food I think we would be extinct by now.

The nay-sayers are often the least educated because they think if they shout loud enough about vegans it will take the focus off them and what they are eating every day!! Sorry rant over!

References

1. Nutritional Update for Physicians: Plant-Based Diets

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3662288/>

2. Umami Foods

https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/umami-foods#TOC_TITLE_HDR_2

3. Plant based umami

<https://www.delishknowledge.com/plant-based-umami/>

4. The 16 Best Sources of Vegan Protein

<https://www.livekindly.co/best-sources-vegan-protein/>

5. Eating red meat daily triples heart disease-related chemical

<https://www.nih.gov/news-events/nih-research-matters/eating-red-meat-daily-triples-heart-disease-related-chemical>

6. Protein deficiency - a rare nutrient deficiency

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29786804/>

7. Mechanisms, Evaluation, and Management of Chronic Constipation

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7573977/>