

Plant Based Diet Wendy Plake

So often when talking to people about their health the last thing they want to hear is that diet is the game changer. We so often will try anything to lose weight or solve our health issues except changing our American style diet. This is the last resort and what everyone considers the biggest sacrifice. The truth is, it's not a sacrifice or an extreme. It's delicious and often much more satisfying!

Two years ago my husband was having many health issues; he was overweight, pre-diabetic, had high blood pressure, anxiety and was having PVC's (premature ventricular contractions). He was fed up with always feeling so terrible. At the same time, I was taking courses through the School of Natural Healing and had just finished the Nutritional Herbalist Course. Together we decided to follow a plant based diet; no sugar, no dairy, no processed foods and no meats. We began eating lots of veggies, fruits, beans and legumes, nuts and seeds and whole grains (not in bread form). We also started taking walks together. In the first year he lost 120 pounds. The anxiety disappeared, the high blood pressure normalized, the PVC's slowly started to stop and his energy levels were so high that our teenagers were exhausted keeping up with him. Today his total weight loss is 188 pounds! I tell you this because he is living proof that food is what cures us.



There will be times that it's hard because it is comfortable and easy to keep eating garbage, but, stick with it. It's amazing how your tastes will change and soon the food you once enjoyed will sound and taste terrible. Enjoy this journey and the health that will follow.

Getting started:

Start slow, no need to stop everything overnight. Start adding more and more veggies of every variety to your day, cooked or raw. If you love meat, start by removing the heavy red meats and pork. Eat fruit when you feel that snacking urge. You can also start replacing your dairy with non-dairy items. There are so many options available. Don't keep processed food in your cupboard. If it's not there a trip to the store will likely give you time to change your mind. All the foods you love can most likely be made vegan, just google it. The good news is that these first initial steps will save you money when you are grocery shopping. Veggies, beans and fruit are much cheaper than meat and all processed foods.

Changing your diet with friends or family is helpful so you can have someone to talk to about the ups and downs. There will be those around you that will laugh at your choices. Be kind and laugh with them then move on when they see how good you feel. Chances are they will follow your lead.

Do it for you. Eating a plant based diet is scientifically proven to cure things like cancer, diabetes and heart disease, all of which are responsible for 610,000 deaths each year; that's 1 in 4 deaths caused by these diseases.

Do it for the environment. Following this diet will decrease your carbon footprint greatly. The carbon footprint of a meat eater is greater than the transportation industry. At current rates, production of meat around the world will double (to about 1.2 trillion pounds of meat per year) by 2050. Our planet cannot afford to supply the water, fuel, pesticides and fertilizer that will require. In addition, public health will deteriorate the closer we get to reaching that mark.

Do it for the animals, compassion for animals is the main reason most people follow this type of diet and a good one. There really is no good reason for us to eat animals when we can clearly survive from a meatless diet. The conditions that the pigs, cows and chickens are kept in are horrible. Imagine if our cats and dogs were treated this way.

Do your research know what you're getting into and make sure you are eating all the nutrients that you need. Don't worry about protein, you will get all you need if you are eating all the fruits and veggies. Adding B12 and omega 3's may be needed, but these can be added easily with things like nutritional yeast and flax seeds.

In the end you will be so glad you made this simple life change. It's healthy, humane and good to the earth. I wish you the best on this journey!

Wendy Plake is Nutritional Herbalist and a student at the School of Natural Healing and works at Ginger's Garden Cafe.