

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Health Benefits of a Plant Based Diet

You probably already know that heart disease is the number one cause of death in America, followed by cancer and stroke. And diabetes isn't far behind. What many people don't know is that in most cases these diseases are completely preventable. That's right; you're not destined for disease just because of your genes. What you eat and how you live play a huge role in disease progression and prevention. So how can you take your health into your own hands? Research shows that a plant based diet is one of the keys.

Many studies have shown that a diet high in vegetables, fruits, and whole grains is an excellent way to maintain health and decrease your risk of many preventable diseases. Often these illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers are referred to as "diseases of affluence". That just means that they mainly occur in industrialized countries where lots of food is easily available consumed in large amounts.

Some interesting studies have shown that when people from countries with low death and sickness rates from these diseases move to the United States and adopt a western diet, their disease risk goes up. What changes when they adopt this "western diet"? Certainly not their genes! An increased intake of animal products and refined grains with a decreased intake of fruits, vegetables and whole grains is to blame.

Eating a plant based diet has been shown over and over to prevent, treat, and even reverse heart and other diseases. Those who follow a plant based diet tend to have lower cholesterol and blood pressure levels. As well as lower rates of heart disease, type II diabetes, and some cancers such as breast, colon, and gastrointestinal tract cancers.

Saturated fat and cholesterol in animal products are usually considered the culprits of these common diseases. However, some recent studies show that a lower risk of cancer may be related to lower intakes of animal *protein*. From this we can see that it may not simply be the saturated fat and cholesterol in animal products that can have negative affects on health.

Following a plant based diet and being physically active can lead to a healthier weight, without preventing appropriate growth and development. What about protein? Plant based diets can easily meet nutrient needs. The key is to choose a variety of foods, in particular whole foods rather than processed or refined foods. Beans, lentils, nuts, seeds, whole grains, and soy products are great natural sources of protein that will help make the body strong and keep the heart strong too. Consuming more plant foods also increases intakes of natural antioxidants which help prevent other forms of damage in the body.

There is so much information out there clogging our minds and our arteries. Yet, it can be simple. Eating plant based diet and being physically active can help you achieve the health you've always wanted and help you avoid the diseases you always thought you'd get.

Black Bean and Corn Salad

1/3 cup fresh lime juice	1 1/2 cups frozen corn kernels
1/2 cup olive oil	1 avocado - peeled, pitted and diced
1 clove garlic, minced	1 red bell pepper, chopped
1 teaspoon salt	2 tomatoes, chopped
1/8 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper	6 green onions, thinly sliced
2 (15 ounce) cans black beans, rinsed and drained	1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro (optional)

Place lime juice, olive oil, garlic, salt, and cayenne pepper in a small jar. Cover with lid, and shake until ingredients are well mixed. In a salad bowl, combine beans, corn, avocado, bell pepper, tomatoes, green onions, and cilantro. Shake lime dressing, and pour it over other ingredients. Stir salad to coat vegetables and beans with dressing, and serve.