

## What is a Whole-Food, Plant-Based diet?

A whole-food, plant-based diet is centered on whole, unrefined, or minimally refined plants.

- It is based on fruits, vegetables, tubers, whole grains, and legumes
- It excludes or minimizes meat (including chicken and fish), dairy products, and eggs
- It excludes highly refined foods like bleached flour, refined sugar, and oil

### Will I get enough protein?

We have been led to believe that primarily animal-based foods contain sufficient protein and, furthermore, that we *need* to eat those foods to avoid becoming protein deficient. All whole, plant-based foods have protein. When you eat a diet based on fruit, vegetables, tubers, whole grains, and legumes about 10% of your total calorie intake will be from protein. And, if you're worried that 10% isn't adequate, note that there's evidence that consuming *too much* protein is harmful—especially when it comes from animal sources.

### Don't I need to consume dairy to ensure I get enough calcium?

Just as with protein it is *not* difficult to get enough calcium—you just need to eat whole, plant-based foods. Calcium, like iron, magnesium, and copper, is a mineral. It is found in the soil, where it is absorbed into the roots of plants. Animals get their calcium by consuming the mineral-abundant plants and metabolizing that calcium into their bodies. Other contributing factors for optimal bone health:

- The levels of acidic compounds are lower in plant foods so they won't draw the calcium from your bones the way animal foods will.
- A low-sodium diet.
- Sufficient vitamin D from exposure to the sun. Vitamin D is a key factor in calcium absorption, and the sun is the best way for us to meet our requirement.
- Strength training and impact exercise that stress your bones—this makes them stronger.

### Will I get enough omega-3s?

Some fats are necessary in our diet. Every whole plant food has fat, and there's no evidence that we need any more fat than what occurs naturally in a low-fat, whole-food, plant-based diet. Omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids appear to be involved in a variety of important bodily functions, including cell membrane stabilization, nervous system function, immune system function, and blood clotting, as well as impacting triglyceride levels, blood pressure, inflammation, cancer, and heart disease. The Standard American Diet is significantly skewed in such a way that we get an excess of omega-6. This excess consumption of omega-6 impairs the absorption of omega-3. The answer is to eliminate or minimize processed and animal-based foods and instead eat a whole-food, plant-based diet, which we know in most cases, restores a healthy omega-6 to omega-3 balance. Adequate omega-3 intake specifically is 1.1 g for adult women and 1.6 g for adult men (1/4 to 1/3 teaspoon) per day. If you meet all your caloric needs with a low-fat, whole-foods diet full of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes, you will easily consume enough essential fatty acids *and* those fatty acids will be in good balance to each other.

### Why should I avoid oil? Isn't oil healthy?

Olive oil is *not* a health food. Neither is coconut, grape seed, flaxseed, or any other oil. Sure, if you replace some or all of the butter in your diet with vegetable oil, some of your cholesterol numbers may look a little bit better, but that's not at all the same as doing *well*. Think about what oil is: fat—and nothing but fat. All the nutrients, including protein, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, fiber, and water, have been thrown away. Oil of any kind has more calories per gram than any other food we know. And without any fiber or water in it, oil lacks the bulk to convey to your senses how many calories you have eaten; this virtually guarantees you will consume more calories at the meal than you need. *All oils* have a negative impact on blood vessels and promote heart disease. Furthermore, they may also lead to increased bleeding through thinning of the blood; negative effects on lung function and oxygen exchange; suppression of certain immune system functions; and increased risk of cancer. Not to mention that excess calories from fat get stored *as* fat, no matter what type of fat calories you consume.

### Do I need to take supplements?

As T. Colin Campbell, PhD, describes it, when it comes to nutrition, the whole is greater than the sum of the individual parts. The nutrients in whole food work together much like a symphony; extract and consume those nutrients apart from the whole, and all bets are off as to their effects. Consequently, we should not take supplements—with the notable and important exception of vitamin B<sub>12</sub>— unless a specific deficiency arises that cannot be corrected with whole, plant-based foods.

### Do I need to take a vitamin B12 supplement?

Yes. Insufficient B<sub>12</sub> can lead to many health issues, including weakness, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, increased irritability, gastrointestinal distress, anemia, and nervous system dysfunction. B<sub>12</sub> is the one nutrient that cannot be obtained sufficiently from today's plant-based diet. This is not because we need to eat animal products to obtain it. In fact, animal products themselves don't always contain enough B<sub>12</sub>. The reason for this is that *neither plants nor animals naturally synthesize B<sub>12</sub>*. It is made from bacteria. Animals consume dirt, which is full of bacteria, through the unwashed plants and non-chlorinated water they consume. B<sub>12</sub> accumulates in the animals' tissues, which becomes a source of the vitamin for humans when we eat the animal. We humans, on the other hand, rarely eat anything unwashed. In our quest to be clean, we remove the dirt that contains B<sub>12</sub>-producing bacteria from our foods. As a result, when you eat a whole-food, plant-based diet, taking a B<sub>12</sub> supplement is the best way to ensure adequate amounts of the nutrient.

(Source: [forksoverknives.com](http://forksoverknives.com))

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#### **Books:**

<i>Reversing Diabetes</i>	Dr. Neal Barnard
<i>The China Study and Whole Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease</i>	Dr. T. Colin Campbell
<i>The Engine 2 Diet</i>	Dr. Caldwell B. Esselstyn Jr.
<i>The Spectrum</i>	Rip Esselstyn
<i>Eat to Live</i>	Dr. Dean Ornish
<i>Health Eating, Healthy World</i>	Dr. Joel Fuhrman
<i>The Starch Solution</i>	J. Morris Hicks
	Dr. John McDougall

#### **Movies:**

*Forks over Knives*  
*Processed People*  
*Food Inc.*

#### **Websites:**

[Forksoverknives.com](http://Forksoverknives.com)  
[DrmcDougall.com](http://DrmcDougall.com)  
[Pcrrm.org](http://Pcrrm.org)  
[Nutritionfacts.org](http://Nutritionfacts.org)

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