



Definition of a plant-based diet and overview of this special issue

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1 Definition of a plant-based diet

A plant-based diet consists of all minimally processed fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, herbs, and spices and excludes all animal products, including red meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and dairy products.

2 Overview

As a practicing cardiologist, I have had the opportunity to witness the profound beneficial impact plant-based nutrition has on cardiovascular health.^[1,2] Having learned about this lifestyle years after my formal training, I was struck by how profoundly my patients' health improved subsequent to this singular change. Prior to recommending a plant-based diet, despite pursuing guideline-based medical therapy, providing procedures as needed, and recommending a Mediterranean style diet, patients' improvements were frankly, modest.

These experiences led me to begin our Cardiac Wellness Program at Montefiore where we encourage patients to adopt a plant-based diet with the goal of preventing and reversing disease. The program's results have revived my love for cardiology, as patients keep returning healthier and feeling better than they have in years. Accordingly, I have

seen patients avoid coronary artery bypass surgery, arterial stents, bariatric surgery, and more. Patients have come off multiple medications as they reversed their diabetes, high blood pressure, and hyperlipidemia. I had rarely, if ever, seen that before.

Based on a detailed review of the literature and my clinical experiences, I believe that encouraging our patients to adopt a plant-based diet and exposing students, trainees, and other practitioners to it should be at the foundation of our approach to health care.

This Special Issue will review the beneficial impact of a plant-based diet on cardiovascular disease and its risk factors. It will discuss practical ways to incorporate plant-based nutrition into your practice and to help your patients adopt it.

As Hippocrates said, "let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food."

References

- 1 Massera D, Graf L, Barba S, Ostfeld R. Angina rapidly improved with a plant-based diet and returned after resuming a Western diet. *J Geriatr Cardiol* 2016; 13: 364–366.
- 2 Massera D, Zaman T, Farren GE, Ostfeld RJ. A whole-food plant-based diet reversed angina without medications or procedures. *Case Rep Cardiol* 2015; 2015: 978906.

This article is part of a Special Issue "A plant-based diet and cardiovascular disease".
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