From Resistance to Results: Behavioral Strategies for Plant-Based Diet Adoption

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Disclosures

Employer: University of California, Irvine

Organizational Involvement: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Evidence Analysis Library, Expert Panel Member for Vegetarian Dietary Patterns project (*unpaid volunteer*).

Learning Objectives

- Describe psychological, social, and practical barriers that contribute to patient resistance toward plant-based eating.
- Apply evidence-based behavioral strategies to overcome common barriers and resistance to plant-based diet adoption.
- Design individualized intervention strategies that effectively guide patients through the transition to plant-based eating based on stages of change.

What people are eating?

are they eating those foods?

ow do we improve diets?

What we'll cover today...

falls under the diverse umbrella of plant-based diets?

Why

should we recommend plant-based diets for prevention & management of chronic diseases?



to effectively get even the most challenging patients and clients to move towards adopting plant-based diets?



deaths globally are associated with an unhealthy diet

Afshin et al. Lancet 2019; 393(10184):1958-1972.

Cardiovascular Disease Statistics



cause of death in the United States



age-adjusted death rate attributable to CVD (per 100,000)



deaths per day from CVD (about every 34 seconds)

LDL Cholesterol Statistics

percent of US adults with high LDL-C (≥130 mg/dL)

25.5



3.65

Million deaths (globally) attributed to high LDL-C in 2021

80%

cardiovascular events preventable through healthy lifestyles and management of known CVD risk factors¹



adults who meet guidelines for whole fruit, and non-starchy vegetable consumption each day²

Trends in Plant-Based Dietary Patterns



FIGURE. Trends in the estimated proportions of United States adults consuming plant-based and vegetarian diets, (NHANES 1999–2020).

US adults consuming plant-based diets (≥50% protein from plants) on a given day increased 14.4% in '99–'00 to 17.2% in '17-'20

US adults consuming vegetarian diets on a given day increased **6.4%** in '99–'00 to **8.2%** in '17-'20

Spectrum of Plant-Based Diets

Variety of Plant-Based Dietary Patterns						
Туре	Red	Poultry	Fish and	Eggs	Milk and Dairy	Grains, Legumes,
	Meat		Seafood		Products	Nuts, Vegetables, and
						Fruit
Flexitarian / (Semi-	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х	Х
Vegetarian) ^a						
Pollo-Vegetarian		Х		Х	Х	Х
Pescatarian			Х	Х	Х	Х
Lacto-Vegetarian					Х	Х
Ovo-Vegetarian				Х		Х
Lacto-Ovo-Vegetarian				Х	Х	Х
Vegan						Х
Whole-Food Vegan						Х
^a Primarily includes plant foods, occasionally includes animal-based foods						
^b Excludes all animal and animal-derived products and processed foods						



Precontemplation

James, 45-year-old male

- Referred by PCP due to high cholesterol and family hx of heart disease
- No interest in changing his meat-heavy diet
- States "Vegetarian diets are for rabbits. I need my protein."
- Unaware of the connection between diet and cardiovascular health

Precontemplation	 James, 45-year-old male Referred by PCP due to high cholesterol and family hx of heart disease No interest in changing his meat-heavy diet States "Vegetarian diets are for rabbits. I need my protein." Unaware of the connection between diet and cardiovascular health 	
Preparation	 Maria, 39-year-old female Currently reducing meat consumption to 3-4 times per week Concerned about maintaining adequate nutrition Has started trying plant-based recipes but feels overwhelmed Wants tools to help transition: meal plans, shopping lists, simple recipes 	

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Action	 Sarah, 28-year-old female Enthusiastic but experiencing some redundancy with the same plant-based foods Reports occasional cravings for cheese Struggling with dining out, social situations, and traveling Committed to the change but needs support with implementation

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Action	 Sarah, 28-year-old female Enthusiastic but experiencing some redundancy with the same plant-based foods Reports occasional cravings for cheese Struggling with dining out, social situations, and traveling Committed to the change but needs support with implementation
Maintenance	 Robert, 52-year-old male Following plant-based diet successfully for 8 months Has established good routines and enjoys the lifestyle Wants to maintain long-term success Interested in helping family members make similar changes



- Climate change
- Land-system change ٠
- **Biodiversity loss** •
- Freshwater use •
- Reactive nitrogen emissions

If animal proteins are part of the diet, more sustainable ones (e.g., chicken, fish) are preferable.

OQ

Social and Behavioral **Considerations**

- Changes in eating behaviors are necessary to attain the benefits of sustainable diets.
- Determining the most fitting source of motivation (i.e., health, environment, economy) for each individual could help to tailor interventions to promote healthier and sustainable diets.

Top Consumer Challenges to Plant-Based Diets



gastronomic significance of meat

Landry et al. Am J Lifestyle Med. 2024;18(5):657-65.

Top Consumer Challenges to Plant-Based Diets



Cultural and gastronomic significance of meat



Nutrient concerns

Landry et al. Am J Lifestyle Med. 2024;18(5):657-65.

Nutrient Intake is Usually NOT of Major Concern* assuming a varied, diverse plant-based diet

- 1. Protein & Amino Acids
- 2. Vitamin D
- 3. Iron
- 4. Omega-3
- 5. Calcium
- 6. Vitamin B-12 with supplementation



Top Consumer Challenges to Plant-Based Diets



Top Consumer Challenges to Plant-Based Diets



"Innovations" in the Plant-Based Space









50g of protein_{erat} No cholesterol









The use of brand names and/or any mention or listing of specific commercial products is solely for educational purposes and does not imply endorsement, nor discrimination against similar brands, products or services not mentioned.

"Innovations" in the Plant-Based Space



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Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Position on Vegetarian Diets





Vegetarian Dietary Patterns for Adults: A Position Paper of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Sudha Raj, PhD, RDN, FAND; Nanci S. Guest, PhD, RD; Matthew J. Landry, PhD, RDN, FAND, FAHA; A. Reed Mangels, PhD, RDN; Roman Pawlak, PhD, RDN; Mary Rozga, PhD, RDN

ABSTRACT

It is the position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics that, in adults, appropriately planned vegetarian and vegan dietary patterns can be nutritionally adequate and can offer long-term health benefits such as improving several health outcomes associated with cardiometabolic diseases. Vegetarian dietary patterns exclude meat, poultry, and seafood, and vegan dietary patterns exclude all foods of animal origin. Registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) and nutrition and dietetics technicians, registered (NDTRs) play a pivotal role in providing meal-planning strategies and evidence-based nutrition information to clients currently following vegetarian or vegan dietary patterns or who may benefit from and express interest in following vegetarian or vegan dietary patterns. RDNs and NDTRs can work with their clients to create tailored, lifestyle-oriented, nutritionally balanced, and culturally suitable vegetarian and vegan dietary patterns that optimize health benefits while reducing concerns about nutrient inadequacies. Adults follow vegetarian and vegan dietary patterns for various reasons. The aim of this Position Paper is to inform health care practitioners, including RDNs and NDTRs, about the evidence-based benefits and potential concerns of following vegetarian and vegan dietary patterns for different populations of nonpregnant, nonlactating adults. This Position Paper is supported by current evidence, including several systematic reviews. As leaders in evidence-based nutrition care, RDNs and NDTRs should aim to support the development and facilitation of vegetarian and vegan dietary patterns and access to nutrient-dense plant-based meals. Promoting a nutrient-balanced vegetarian dietary pattern on both individual and community scales may be an effective tool for preventing and managing many diet-related conditions. This Position was approved in January 2025 and will remain in effect until December 31, 2032. J Acad Nutr Diet. 2025; (): -.

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Position on Vegetarian Diets



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American Heart Association Dietary Scientific Statement



EMPHASIZE

- Fruits and vegetables
- Whole grain foods
- Healthy sources of proteins; fish and seafood, legumes and nuts, low-fat/fat-free dairy, poultry and if desired lean meat
- Liquid plant oils (eg, soybean oil and canola oil)



MINIMIZE

- Beverages and foods with added sugars
- Ultra-processed foods
- Processed meats
- Food high in salt
- Alcoholic beverages
- Tropic oils
- Adjust energy intake to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight
- · Follow this guidance regardless of where food is prepared or consumed

American Heart Association Dietary Scientific Statement





• Adjust energy intake to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight

Follow this guidance regardless of where food is prepared or consumed

American Cancer Society **Dietary Guidelines**



reduce

American Cancer Society Guideline for Diet and Physical **Activity for Cancer Prevention**

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Wood Johnson Medical School, N Brunswick, New Jersey Division of Medical Dietetics and Health Sciences, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, Comprehensive Cancer Center and James Solove Research Institute, The Ohio State University College of Medicine, Columbus, Ohio ⁸Department of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences Department

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cer from the American Heart Association and the American Diabetes

the prevention of coronary heart disease and diabetes as well as for general health promotion, as defined by the 2015 to 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. CA Cancer J Clin 2020;70:245-271. © 2020 American Cancer Society.

Keywords: cancer prevention, dietary patterns, nutrition, physical activity

American College of Lifestyle Medicine Dietary Guidelines





ADD HERBS & SPICES

ACLM Dietary Guidelines: Hauser et al. J Fam Pract. 2022; 71(Supp 1):S5-S16.



74%

Among 78 clinical practice guidelines, 91% made dietary pattern recommendations, and approximately half, 49% endorsed patterns centered on plant foods

Cara et al. Adv Nutr. 2023; 14(3):500-515.

Potential Mechanisms for Cardiovascular Effects with a Healthful Plant-Based Diet

Healthful Plant-Based Diet	
Low energy-density Low saturated fat, high fiber content	
High dietary fiber Especially cereal fibers	
Desirable fat composition <i>Low saturated fat, high unsaturated fat</i>	
High levels of antioxidant nutrients Polyphenols, carotenoids, Vitamins C&E	
High levels of micronutrients B vitamins, magnesium, potassium	
Low levels of certain dietary factors Heme iron, nitrates, nitrites	

Potential Mechanisms for Cardiovascular Effects with a Healthful Plant-Based Diet



Potential Mechanisms for Cardiovascular Effects with a Healthful Plant-Based Diet



ALL VEGETARIAN DIETS

VEGAN DIETS

General Healthy, Adult Population

Primordial & Primary Prevention

Likely Benefit	 Cardiovascular disease incidence Coronary heart disease incidence 		
Possible Benefit	 Cardiovascular disease mortality ① Coronary heart disease mortality ① C-reactive protein ① 	 Blood pressure o LDL cholesterol Triglycerides o C-reactive protein o BMI o 	
May be no Difference	 Stroke incidence ① Stroke mortality ① Cerebrovascular disease mortality o LDL cholesterol ① Triglycerides ① 	 Cardiovascular disease incidence ① Coronary heart disease incidence ① Stroke incidence ① 	
Uncertain		 Myocardial infarctions o Cardiovascular disease mortality o Coronary heart disease mortality o Cerebrovascular disease mortality o 	
Certainty of Evidence: $\circ =$ Very Low; $\odot =$ Low; $\bullet =$ Moderate.			

What are the effects of a healthy and entirely plantbased (vegan) or a healthy omnivorous diet... on cardiometabolic risk factors

during an 8-week dietary intervention

among pairs of generally healthy identical twins
Acknowledgements

Nutrition Studies Research Group:

Christopher D. Gardner, PhD, FAHA Cate Ward, PhD, RD Lindsay Durand, MPH, RD Amanda Zeitlin, MPH Tayler Hennings, MPH Jennifer Robinson, PhD Kristen Cunanan, PhD



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TWINS Study Sample (n= 44; 22 pairs)





Non-Hispanic White 72%



Education (≥College) 68%



BMI Range 20-37

Scaffolding for Success

- Nutrition education & skill development
- Cognitive restructuring
- Self-monitoring
- Environmental modification
- Mindfulness
- Social support
- Preventative problem solving





Dietary Adherence: Macronutrients



Dietary Adherence: Fat



Dietary Adherence: Protein



Dietary Adherence: Carbohydrates



Carbohydrate Distribution

Dietary Adherence: Vegetable Intake



Dietary Adherence: Meat Intake



Dietary Adherence: Meat Alternatives Intake



Dietary Adherence: Selected Nutrients



Sweet Potatoes

Quinoa

2.2 mg per large potato (27% of RDA)

2.8 mg per cup cooked (35% of RDA)

;6(11):e234457. ClinicalTrials.gov Identifier: NCT05297825

Landry et al. JAMA Network Open. 2023;6(11):e234457. Clinical

Dietary Adherence: Selected Nutrients



Network Open.

RCT: Cardiometabolic Effects of Omnivorous vs Vegan Diets in Identical Twins

INTERVENTION

POPULATION

10 Men, 34 Women



FINDINGS

A healthy vegan diet led to significantly improved

Landry MJ, Ward CP, Cunanan, KM, et al. Cardiometabolic effects of omnivorous vs vegan diets in identical twins: a randomized clinical trial. JAMA Netw Open. 2023;6(11):e2344457. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.44457

44 Randomized and analyzed (21 pairs of twins)



A healthy plant-based diet offers a **significant** protective cardiometabolic advantage compared with a healthy omnivorous diet.

FIGURE: Percent Change from Baseline to 8-Weeks (Median and Interquartile Range) in Primary and Secondary Outcomes between Vegan and Omnivorous Diet Arms.



Landry et al. JAMA Network Open. 2023;6(11):e234457.

Change in LDL-Cholesterol



Recent/Forthcoming Work

Dwaraka et al. BMC Medicine (2024) 22:301 https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-024-03513-w **BMC Medicine**

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Unveiling the epigenetic impact of vegan vs. omnivorous diets on aging: insights from the Twins Nutrition Study (TwiNS)

Varun B. Dwaraka^{1*†}, Lucia Aronica^{2†}, Natalia Carreras-Gallo¹, Jennifer L. Robinson², Tayler Hennings³, Matthew M. Carter⁴, Michael J. Corley⁵, Aaron Lin¹, Logan Turner¹, Ryan Smith¹, Tavis L. Mendez¹, Hannah Went¹, Emily R. Ebel⁴, Erica D. Sonnenburg⁴, Justin L. Sonnenburg^{4,6,7} and Christopher D. Gardner^{2*}

Forthcoming

- Detailed dietary quality & composition analysis (under review)
- Microbiome (*under review*)

Open Access Key Finding:

A short-term vegan diet is associated with epigenetic age benefits



One identical twin went vegan while the other didn't. See what happened

CNN News, 30 Nov 2023

Sign up for CNN's Eat, But Better: Mediterranean Style. Our eight-part guide shows you a delicious expert-backed eating...



Is a vegan diet really healthier than eating meat? Rare identical twin study offers answer

TODAY, 06 Dec 2023

As many ramp up to make drastic changes to their diets in the new year, a new study explores the benefits of following a vegan...

USNews Identical Twins Study Shows Vegan Diets Helping the Heart

USNews.com, 01 Dec 2023

By Dennis Thompson HealthDay Reporter FRIDAY, Dec. 1, 2023 (HealthDay News) -- A new study of identical twins has provided...



When one twin goes vegan and the other doesn't

Vox.com, 12 Jan 2024

A recent Stanford University study won't end the raging war over what we should eat for optimal health, but it does give vegans...



Is Eating a Plant-Based Diet Better for You?

TIME Magazine, 03 Jan 2024

It's no secret that fruits and veggies are good for you. But a new Netflix show, You Are What You Eat: A Twin Experiment, shows...



New Study Uses Twins, Finds That Vegan Diet Is Healthier Than Eating Meat

People, 09 Dec 2023







Did the Twins Stick to their Diets?

After this study, I plan to	Overall (n=42)	Vegan (n=21)	Omnivore (n=21)
Continue to closely follow all recommendations for my eating pattern	7 (16.7)	1 (4.8)	6 (28.6)
Continue to follow some but not all recommendations for my eating pattern	33 (78.6)	19 (90.5)	14 (66.7)
Return to my original eating pattern before starting the study	2 (4.8)	1 (4.8)	1 (4.8)
Data are presented as n (%)			









Charlie & Michael CHARLIE FOLLOWED THE VEGAN DIET Before the study: Omnivore After the study: Almost 90% vegetarian

MICHAEL FOLLOWED THE OMNIVORE DIET

Before the study: Pescatarian (ate fish and seafood, but not red meat or poultry) **After the study:** Vegetarian







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Carolyn & Rosalyn CAROLYN FOLLOWED THE VEGAN DIET Before the study: Omnivore After the study: Omnivore but eating more plantbased

ROSALYN FOLLOWED THE OMNIVORE DIET Before the study: Omnivore After the study: Omnivore but eating more plantbased





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John & Jevon JOHN FOLLOWED THE VEGAN DIET Before the study: Omnivore After the study: Omnivore with almost no red meat

JEVON FOLLOWED THE OMNIVORE DIET

Before the study: Omnivore After the study: Omnivore with almost no red meat



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JEVON FOLLOWED THE OMNIVORE DIET

Before the study: Omnivore After the study: Omnivore with almost no red meat

Pam & Wendy

PAM FOLLOWED THE PLANT-BASED DIET

Before the study: Omnivore **After the study:** Omnivore but eating half as much meat

WENDY FOLLOWED THE OMNIVORE DIET

Before the study: Omnivore After the study: Omnivore but eating half as much meat

James, 45-year-old male

- Referred by PCP due to high cholesterol and family hx of heart disease
- No interest in changing his meat-heavy diet
- States "Vegetarian diets are for rabbits. I need my protein."
- Unaware of the connection between diet and cardiovascular health

Nutrition Counseling & Intervention Approaches

- Provide neutral, non-judgmental information about the link between diet and cardiovascular health
- Share evidence-based research on plant-based protein sources
- Encourage self-reflection through open-ended questions about health goals
- Avoid pushing for immediate change; focus on building awareness

Plant-Based Goal

Semi-vegetarian diet. Attempting a 'Meatless Monday'

Considerations for All Stages

- Use motivational interviewing techniques
- Focus on patient-identified goals and values
- Provide stage-appropriate resources and support
- Regular assessment of progress and barriers
- Celebrate successes, no matter how small
- Maintain open, non-judgmental communication

Precontemplation

Maria, 39-year-old female

- Currently reducing meat consumption to 3-4 times per week
- Concerned about maintaining adequate nutrition
- Has started trying plant-based recipes but feels overwhelmed
- Wants tools to help transition: meal plans, shopping lists, simple recipes

Preparation

Nutrition Counseling & Intervention Approaches

- Reinforce and celebrate initial success
- Provide practical tools to aid the transition
- Address specific nutritional concerns with evidence-based information
- Recommend plant-based alternatives
- Discuss potential barriers and problem-solving strategies

Plant-Based Goal

Ovo, lacto, or ovo-lacto vegetarian

Considerations for All Stages

- Use motivational interviewing techniques
- Focus on patient-identified goals and values
- Provide stage-appropriate resources and support
- Regular assessment of progress and barriers
- Celebrate successes, no matter how small
- Maintain open, non-judgmental communication



Plant-Based Goal

Vegetarian or vegan diet

Considerations for All Stages

- Use motivational interviewing techniques
- Focus on patient-identified goals and values
- Provide stage-appropriate resources and support
- Regular assessment of progress and barriers
- Celebrate successes, no matter how small
- Maintain open, non-judgmental communication

Robert, 52-year-old male

- Following plant-based diet successfully for 8 months
- Has established good routines and enjoys the lifestyle
- Wants to maintain long-term success
- Interested in helping family members make similar changes

Maintenance

Nutrition Counseling & Intervention Approaches

- Review long-term nutrition strategies and potential deficiency prevention
- Discuss strategies for maintaining motivation
- Share resources and tips for family education and engagement
- Regular monitoring of health markers
- Develop plan for handling potential setbacks

Plant-Based Goal

Whole food vegetarian or vegan diet

Considerations for All Stages

- Use motivational interviewing techniques
- Focus on patient-identified goals and values
- Provide stage-appropriate resources and support
- Regular assessment of progress and barriers
- Celebrate successes, no matter how small
- Maintain open, non-judgmental communication



Meet patients where they are at and assess their willingness to make dietary changes.



Start gradually and build off favorite foods. Going plantbased doesn't have to happen overnight.



Pro Tip Create a local "Where to Eat" guide with some of your favorite dishes.

	Type of Food	Try the	
Sit Down Restaurants			
<u>Mai Thai</u> 207 San Jacinto Blvd #201, Austin, TX 78701	Thai	Pad Kee Mao (Drunken Noodles) with Tofu	
<u>The Vegan Nom</u> 2324 E Cesar Chavez St #A, Austin, TX 78702	Food Truck	Birdie Sanders Burrito	
Quick Bites			
<u>CAVA</u> 2426 Guadalupe St, Austin, TX 78705	Fast-Casual	Greens and grain bowl with falafel as protein	
AUS Airport			
Peached Tortilla (Gate 17)	Asian Fusion	Japanese sweet potato taco	



Address misconceptions or misunderstandings, food phobias, and resistance to trying new foods.



Don't teach everything we know about plant-based diets in one session.





You can't go wrong with a diet that at its core includes a wide variety of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.



What we covered today...

falls under the diverse umbrella of plant-based diets.

Why

should we recommend plant-based diets for prevention & management of chronic diseases.

HOW

to effectively get even the most challenging patients and clients to move towards adopting plant-based diets.

Thanks! Any questions?

You can connect with me at:

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