



Powerful Effects Of A Plant-Based Diet

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Recently I watched a lecture by Dr. Michael Greger called *From Table to Able: Combating Disabling Diseases with Food*. Dr. Greger provided a lot of data supporting a vegetarian plant-based diet. Although, as with many nutritionists, I have never advocated a completely vegetarian diet, some of the studies he quoted really made me sit up and take notice.

For example, He quoted a study where 21 patients with moderate to severe diabetic neuropathy for 10 years or more were put on a plant based diet and in 5-14 days 17 of 21 patients' experienced complete relief. 10 years or more of pain eliminated in days, that's pretty dramatic.

Not only did the pain subside, glucose levels dropped and medications were reduced. Some of the patients who had been diabetics for 20 years, in a



matter of weeks, were off all medication.

He quoted a study by Dean Ornish. Using a plant-based diet angina was reduced by 91% after one year whereas the control group who followed traditional medical care had an increase in angina of 186%. In a follow up study of 1000 patients following a plant-based diet 74% became angina free and another 9% moved from limiting pain to mild pain.

Dr. Greger cited a single case of a 65 year old man

with severe angina, so severe he could only walk 10 steps. After going on a plant-based diet for 8 months he climbed a mountain. Walter Kempner and his colleagues showed a reversal of diabetic retinopathy in 25% of his patients using mostly a fruit and rice based diet.

Medical science reveals that an inefficient blood supply to the brain can have very grave consequences. Post mortem studies of Alzheimer's patients show they have significantly more atherosclerotic narrowing of

the intracranial arteries. Dr. Greger presented pictures of brain MRI scans. Those eating vegetarian diets had greater blood flow to the brain.

In light of that, not surprising, he quoted a study where those who eat vegetarian are 2-3 times less likely to develop dementia. He showed that the lowest rates of Alzheimer's in the world are in rural India where most natives primarily consume a vegetarian plant-based diet.

There is a lot of common ground in his presentation. For example, processed meats can cause problems. A study in the United States of over 600,000 subjects found if women reduce their processed meat to 1.6 grams a day (1/4 slice of bacon), they reduce the risk of heart disease by 20%.

Plant-based diets include vegetables, fruits, legumes, beans, peas, lentils, seeds, nuts and whole grains. As you may be aware, some whole grains found in this country can be a problem due to genetic modifications. GMO glutes inhibit protease production. Also, there are over 300 new proteins in gluten that weren't there 50 years ago. Sticky indigestible proteins that the body can't identify can even cause autoimmune type symptoms.

Whether we are consciously aware of it or not, our dietary intake influences the structure and activity of the trillions of microorganisms residing in the human gut. It is these microorganisms that can turn on and off all

kinds of signaling mechanisms involved in pain, inflammation, immune dysfunction, etc. Commercial meat proteins are often tainted with antibiotics from the animal feed. Those antibiotics also affect the microorganism in the gut as well. Animal proteins are the sum of the food and grains an animal eats, grains laden with pesticides and herbicides. So the best sources of animal protein are pastured chickens and eggs, grass fed beef or wild caught fish.



But here's the take home message for me. We all, that means everyone, have to make a conscious daily effort to increase the percentage of plants in our diet. Plant based fibers and

phytonutrients encourage the growth and health of the microorganisms in the gut. Plants offer minerals in a form that the body can utilize. Plants offer natural antioxidants and phytochemicals in more ways than nutritional science can explain to date.

Also, biochemical individuality is a factor that we should never discount. One size does not fit all, and it seems clear from the data Dr. Greger presents that some people do very well on a vegetarian diet.

If you have struggled with chronic health conditions, ask your clinician about plant-based diets. Perhaps consider a 30 day trial of a vegetarian diet. Your clinician may add animal proteins one at a time, and monitor your progress for returning symptoms. But we can all certainly increase the percentage of plants in our diets; and without a doubt, you will notice a difference.