

Plant-based diets come with many benefits: Prevent and cure disease and reduce medication intake all through diet

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Plant-based diets have received much attention recently, with more celebrities making the change, and countless books touting their benefits. Recent research has shown that plant-based diets are associated with lower incidence of stroke, heart attack and many forms of cancer as well as increased life expectancy and fertility.

"More and more research is suggesting that one of the best things you can do for your heart and your overall health is to implement a plant-based diet," said Andrew Freeman, MD, [cardiologist](#) at National Jewish Health. "Many doctors do a great job of controlling disease but adopting a plant-based diet is a lifestyle you can make to not only prevent, but offer a chance at a cure of disease."

The two main types of plant-based diets are vegetarian and vegan. A vegetarian diet is simply a diet that does not include any meat. A [vegan diet](#) is a [vegetarian diet](#) that also excludes eggs, dairy products and all other animal-derived ingredients. Dr. Freeman follows a vegan diet.

"While [potato chips](#) and soda would technically qualify as a plant-based diet, that is not what we're advocating," said Dr. Freeman. "Your diet should be well balanced, with low-fat plant foods, including [whole grains](#) and plants."

On average, plant-based diets are lower in calories and more dense in

nutrients. The bulk of calories in a [balanced diet](#) come from whole grain starches mixed with vegetables, some fruit and legumes (beans, lentils, peanuts, etc.). One caveat with plant-based diets is that they often lack B12 vitamins, but most soy and almond milks are supplemented with B12. Dr. Freeman says a sample daily plant-based diet could look like:

- **Breakfast:** Oatmeal (made with water) or 100 percent wholegrain bread with sliced fruit
- **Lunch:** Sandwich with 100 percent wholegrain bread, peanut or almond butter and preserves or hummus with vegetables.
- **Dinner:** [Brown rice](#), black beans and vegetables—a healthy burrito bowl, as an example. Skip popular toppings such as sour cream, cheese and meat.

"Meals like this are satisfying, filling and very nutrient-dense," said Dr. Freeman. He recommends doing your research and checking with your physician before jumping into any plant-based diet. Make sure you understand how to get the right mix of vitamins and nutrients as well as adequate amounts of protein. There are many resources available online and in books and videos that can help you plan a healthy, plant-based diet.

Provided by National Jewish Health

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