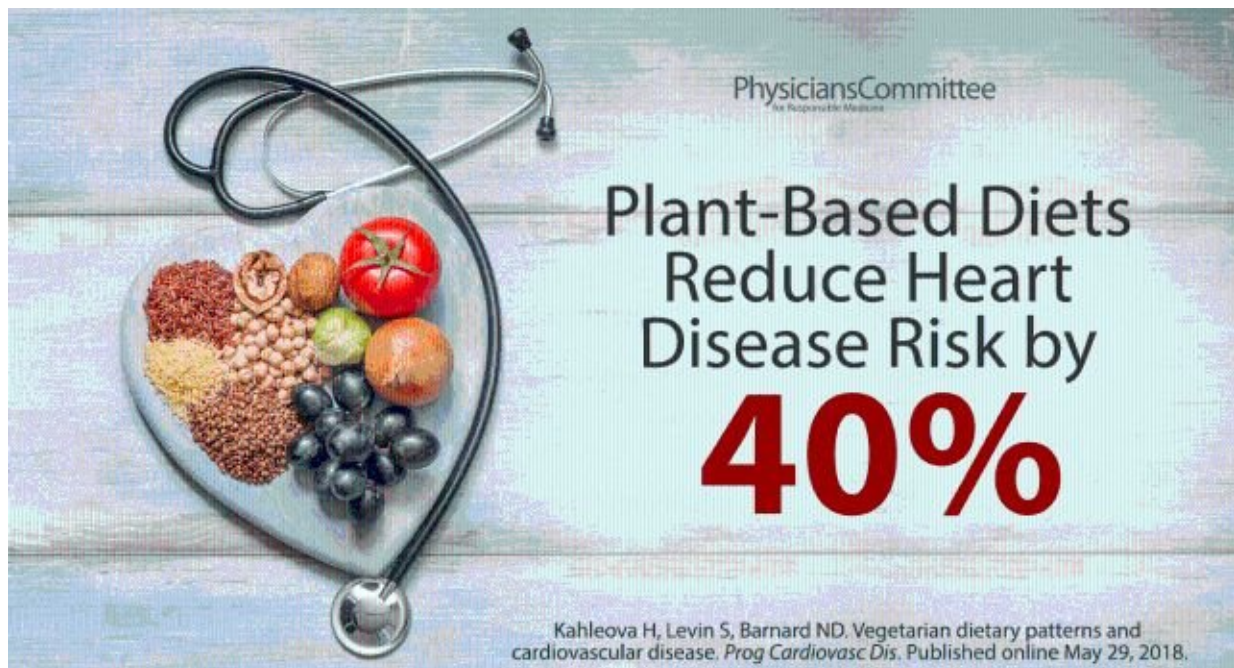


New review highlights benefits of plant-based diets for heart health

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A new review finds that plant-based diets lower the risk for heart disease by 40 percent. Credit: Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine

Vegetarian, especially vegan, diets are associated with better cardiovascular health, according to a new review published in the journal *Progress in Cardiovascular Diseases*.

Researchers with the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine

looked at multiple clinical trials and [observational studies](#) and found strong and consistent evidence that plant-based dietary patterns can prevent and reverse atherosclerosis and decrease other markers of [cardiovascular disease](#) (CVD) risk, including blood pressure, blood lipids, and weight.

The review found that a plant-based diet:

- Reduces the risk of death from cardiovascular disease by 40 percent.
- Reduces the risk of coronary [heart disease](#) by 40 percent.
- Fully or partially opens blocked arteries in up to 91 percent of patients.
- Reduces the risk of hypertension by 34 percent.
- Is associated with 29 mg/dL and 23 mg/dL lower total cholesterol and LDL-C levels, respectively, compared with non-vegetarian diets.
- Is associated with weight loss.

"A plant-based diet has the power to not only prevent heart disease, but also manage and sometimes even reverse it—something no drug has ever done," says study author Hana Kahleova, M.D., Ph.D., Physicians Committee director of clinical research.

The review notes that a healthy diet and lifestyle reduces the risk for a heart attack by 81-94 percent, while medications can only reduce the risk by 20-30 percent.

Plant-based diets benefit [heart health](#) because they're rich in fiber and phytonutrients—like carotenoids, anthocyanins, and lycopene—which reduce inflammation and oxidative stress. Animal products are packed with saturated fat, cholesterol, heme iron, and environmental pollutants and can harm heart health.

"Heart disease is the world's leading cause of death. This study proves it doesn't have to be," says Dr. Kahleova.

Around the globe, cardiovascular disease is responsible for 46 percent of non-communicable disease deaths, or 17.5 million deaths a year.

More information: Hana Kahleova et al, Vegetarian Dietary Patterns and Cardiovascular Disease, *Progress in Cardiovascular Diseases* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/j.pcad.2018.05.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pcad.2018.05.002)

Provided by Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine

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