

Plant-based diets promote healthful aging, according to new editorial

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Adopting a plant-based diet can promote healthful aging and mitigate the global burden of disease, according to an editorial published in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*.

Researchers with the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine reviewed [clinical trials](#) and [epidemiological studies](#) related to aging and found that while aging increases the risk for noncommunicable chronic diseases, healthful diets can help. The editorial shows that plant-based diets can reduce the risk of diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cancer, and [heart disease](#) by almost 50% and could cut cardiometabolic-related deaths in the United States by half.

"Modulating [lifestyle risk factors](#) and adopting a healthful diet are powerful tools that may delay the aging process, decrease age-associated co-morbidities and mortality, and increase life expectancy," write the authors. They cite studies showing that plant-based diets rich in fruits, vegetables, grains, and legumes:

- Reduce the risk of developing metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes by about 50%.
- Reduce the risk of coronary heart disease events by an estimated 40%.
- Reduce the risk of cerebral vascular disease events by 29%.
- Reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease by more than 50%.
- May reduce the risk for cognitive diseases such as Alzheimer's [disease](#) by almost 50%.

The researchers also note that plant-based diets have been tied to increased life expectancy, as evidenced by the world's "Blue Zones," where populations subsist mostly on plant-based foods rich in phytochemicals and antioxidants that have been associated with longer [life expectancy](#).

"The global population of adults 60 years old or older is expected to double from 841 million to 2 billion by 2050, presenting clear challenges for our [health care system](#)," says study author Hana Kahleova, MD,

Ph.D., director of clinical research for the Physicians Committee.
"Fortunately, simple diet changes can go a long way in helping populations lead longer, healthier lives."

The authors also note that these improvements in health will reduce health care costs caused by chronic diseases. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, lifestyle-related chronic diseases are the leading cause of death and disability in the United States, accounting for the majority of the nation's annual \$3.5 trillion in health care spending.

More information: Hana Kahleova et al, Plant-Based Diets for Healthy Aging, *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* (2020).
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