

Study shows plant protein consumption can boost human lifespan

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A team of researchers at the U.S. National Institutes of Health's National Cancer Institute has found that older people who eat more plant protein as opposed to meat-based protein tend to live longer lives. In their paper

published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, the group describes their analysis of a database compiled by a team working on the National Institutes of Health-AARP Diet and Health Study.

Over the past several decades, food and health experts have been working to better understand which foods are bad for people and which are good. The process has led to sometimes conflicting messages. In this new effort, the researchers have looked specifically at [protein consumption](#). Protein can be found in red meat, pork, chicken, seafood and eggs. But it can also be found in [plant foods](#) such as peanuts, chia seeds, tofu, broccoli and oats. The researchers wanted to know if eating animal versus plant-based protein made a difference on longevity. To find out, they accessed data from the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study, which has been compiling [diet](#) and [health information](#) on people age 50 to 71 over the past 16 years. In the database, there is information on 179,068 women and 237,036 men from several states and two major cities, Detroit and Atlanta. The median age of the people when they entered the database was 62. The database contains dietary information for each of the people it lists, which allowed the researchers to measure how much protein they were eating and whether it was plant or animal-based.

The researchers found that those people, male or female, who consumed more than average amounts of plant-based protein, had a 5% lower than average mortality rate. They also found that the more plant-based proteins a person ate, the longer they tended to live. And they found that those who swapped just 3% of the animal-based protein in their diets for plant-based proteins, saw a 10% reduction in mortality risk.

The researchers also found that swapping animal-based protein for plant-based [protein](#) foods led to reductions in cardiovascular disease. Switching just 3% of such proteins resulted in an 11% reduction in cardiovascular-disease related deaths in men and 12% in women.

More information: Jiaqi Huang et al. Association Between Plant and Animal Protein Intake and Overall and Cause-Specific Mortality, *JAMA Internal Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1001/jamainternmed.2020.2790](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamainternmed.2020.2790)

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