

'Veganuary' cuts fat and cholesterol but also reduces vitamins and minerals: Study

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Meat-eaters who take part in "Veganuary" could cut their saturated fat and cholesterol intake but may also miss out on vital micronutrients, according to a new study.

Researchers from the University of Nottingham's School of Biosciences conducted studies that analyzed meat-eaters and vegetarians aged 18 to 60 who signed up for Veganuary, comparing them to vegans, vegetarians and meat-eaters who kept eating as normal. Their findings, published in [Nutrients](#), show that there are positive and negative effects on the diet for people who take part.

The results showed that there was a significant reduction in levels of vitamin B12 and iodine if people didn't take [dietary supplements](#). Iodine is found in [dairy products](#), as well as in eggs, white fish and seafood, all of which aren't allowed as part of Veganuary. People in the U.K. are unlikely to become deficient in iodine, but women of child-bearing age, who are more likely to adopt vegan diets, need a good supply if they become pregnant, as it is critical for their [unborn child's](#) developing brain.

Meat-eaters switching to a [vegan diet](#) also saw a reduction in cholesterol with an estimated ten-fold decrease, a reduction that could protect against heart disease long-term. There was also a reduction in saturated fatty acids.

The study looked at meat-eaters and vegetarians aged 18 to 60 who signed up for Veganuary, comparing them to [vegans](#), vegetarians and [meat-eaters](#) who kept eating as normal. The participants were asked to fill out food frequency questionnaires for their typical dietary intake in November and December and then in January.

Dr. Simon Welham, senior author of the study, School of Biosciences, says, "Veganuary can be done perfectly healthily, if followed sensibly, and our study shows there can be pros and cons to switching from a meat and dairy diet. As with any major dietary change, it is important that people plan properly to ensure they are getting the nutrients they need.

"While we showed some clear health benefits from switching from meat and dairy to vegan, the study also highlighted the vitamins and minerals people taking part in Veganuary need to pay particular attention to, namely [iodine](#) and B12. Our advice for people taking part this year would be to check food labels carefully and try to ensure alternative products have these nutrients added.

"Omnivores pledging to vegan campaigns may wish to seek nutritional advice before switching diets to ensure their nutrient intake is adequate. As this is unlikely for many, in the absence of dietary consultation, there is a need for clear guidance that is visible to all those considering such a dietary change."

More information: Elizabeth Eveleigh et al, Adoption of a Short-Term (4-Week) Vegan Diet as Part of 'Veganuary' Significantly Reduces Saturated Fatty Acid (SFA), Cholesterol, B12, and Iodine Intake in Omnivorous Individuals—An Observational Study, *Nutrients* (2023).
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