Plant-based diets improve cardiometabolic risk factors in diabetes patients

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Plant-based diets improve glycemic control, lead to weight loss, and improve cholesterol in people with type 2 diabetes, according to a new review published in the journal *Clinical Nutrition*.

Researchers reviewed nine randomized controlled trials that assessed the effectiveness of vegan and vegetarian diets for diabetes patients. The results show that those who ate a plant-based diet lowered their cholesterol, lost weight, lowered HbA1c levels, and improved other cardiometabolic risk factors when compared to those who ate a nonvegetarian diet.

More than 100 million Americans currently have diabetes or prediabetes. Those with diabetes are two to four times more likely to die from cardiovascular disease than those who do not have diabetes.

"The link between diabetes and cardiovascular disease is strong. Sixty to seventy percent of people who have type 2 diabetes die of heart disease," says study co-author Hana Kahleova, M.D., Ph.D., director of clinical research at the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. "The good news is that this study shows that the same simple prescription—eating a plant-based diet—can reduce our risk for heart problems and improve type 2 diabetes at the same time."

The study authors suggest that plant-based diets, which center on fruits, vegetables, grains, and legumes, benefit both glycemic control and cardiovascular health, because they are low in saturated fat, rich in phytochemicals, high in fiber, and often rich in low-glycemic fruits and vegetables.

Previous controlled trials and prospective cohort studies have shown that a plant-based dietary pattern is associated with a lower risk of coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, hypertension, cardiovascular mortality, and all-cause mortality.


Provided by Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine