REASONS FOR BEING VEGETARIAN / VEGAN

The Scientific Approach

Today, with increasing evidence of diet’s critical effect on good health and longevity, more and more people are investigating this question: Is the human body better suited to a vegetarian diet or one that includes meat?

In the search for answers two areas should be considered – the anatomical structure of the human body, and the physical effects of meat consumption.

Since eating begins with the hands and mouth, what can the anatomy of these bodily parts tell us? Human teeth, like those of the herbivorous creatures, are designed for grinding and chewing vegetable matter. Humans lack the sharp front teeth for tearing flesh that are characteristic of carnivores. Meat-eating animals generally swallow their food without chewing it and therefore do not require molars or a jaw capable of moving sideways. Also, the human hand, with no strong sharp claws and with its opposable thumb, is better suited to foraging and harvesting fruits and vegetables than to killing prey.

Once within the stomach, meat requires digestive juices high in hydrochloric acid. The stomachs of humans produce acid less than one-twentieth the strength of that found in carnivores.

Another crucial difference between the meat-eater and the vegetarian is found in the intestinal tract, where the food is further digested and nutrients are passed into the blood. A piece of meat is just part of a corpse, and its putrefaction creates poisonous wastes within the body. Therefore meat must be quickly eliminated. For this purpose, carnivores possess alimentary canals only three times the length of their bodies. Since man, like other non-flesh eating animals, has an alimentary canal twelve times his body length, rapidly decaying flesh is retained for a much longer time, producing a number of undesirable toxic effects.

One body organ adversely affected by these toxins is the kidney. This vital organ, which extracts waste from the blood, is strained by the overload of poisons introduced by meat consumption. Even moderate meat-eaters demand three times more work from their kidneys than do vegetarians. The kidneys of a young person may be able to cope with this stress, but as one grows older the risk of kidney disease and failure greatly increases.

PHYSIOLOGICAL COMPARISONS

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The inability of the human body to deal with excessive animal fats in the diet is another indication of the unnaturalness of meat-eating. Carnivorous animals can metabolise almost unlimited amounts of cholesterol and fats without any adverse effects. In experiments with dogs, up to one half pound of butterfat was added to their daily diet over a period of two years, producing absolutely no change in their serum cholesterol level.

On the other hand, the vegetarians have a very limited ability to deal with any level of cholesterol or saturated fats beyond the normal required by the body. When over a period of many years an excess is consumed, fatty deposits (plaque) accumulate on the inner walls of the arteries, producing a condition known as arteriosclerosis, hardening of the arteries. Because the plaque deposits constrict the flow of blood to the heart, the potential for heart attacks, strokes, and blood clots is tremendously increased.

**Cancer**

Further evidence of the unsuitability of the human intestinal tract for digestion of flesh is the relationship, established by numerous studies, between colon cancer and meat-eating. One reason for the incidence of cancer is the high-fat, low-fibre content of the meat-centred diet. This results in a slow transit time through the colon, allowing toxic wastes to do their damage. Moreover, while being digested, meat is known to generate steroid metabolites possessing carcinogenic (cancer-producing) properties.

As research continues, evidence linking meat-eating to other forms of cancer is building up at an alarming rate. The National Academy of Sciences reported in 1983 that “people may be able to prevent many common cancers by eating less fatty meats and more vegetables and grains.” And in his Notes on the Causation of Cancer, Rollo Russell, “I have found of twenty-five nations eating flesh largely, nineteen had a high cancer rate and only one had a low rate, and that of thirty-five nations eating little or no flesh, none had a high rate.”

Some of the most shocking results in cancer research have come from exploration of the effects of nitrosamines. Nitrosamines are formed when secondary amines, prevalent in beer, wine, tea and tobacco, for example, react with chemical preservatives in meat. The FDA has labelled nitrosamines “one of the most formidable and versatile groups of carcinogens yet discovered, and their role . . . in the etiology of human cancer has caused growing apprehension among experts.” Dr. William Lijinsky of Oak Ridge National Laboratory conducted experiments in which nitrosamines were fed to test animals. Within six months he found malignant tumours in one hundred percent of the animals. “The cancers,” he said, “are all over the place; in the brain, lungs, pancreas, stomach, liver, adrenals, and intestines. The animals are a bloody mess.”

**Dangerous Chemicals In Meat**

Numerous other potentially hazardous chemicals, of which consumers are generally unaware, are present in meat and meat products. In their book Poisons In Your Body, Gary and Stevens Null give us an inside look at the latest gimmicks used in the corporate-owned animal factories. “The animals are kept alive and fattened by the continuous administration of tranquillisers, hormones, antibiotics, and 2,700 other drugs,” they write. “The process starts even before birth and continues long after death. Although these drugs will still be present in the meat when you eat it, the law does not require that they be listed on the package.”

One of these chemicals is diethylstilbestrol (DES), a growth hormone that has been used in the U.S. for the last twenty years despite studies that have shown it to be carcinogenic. Banned as a serious health hazard in thirty-two countries, it continues to be used in the U.S. meat industry, possibly because the FDA estimates it saves meat producers $500 million annually.

Another popular growth stimulant is arsenic. In 1972 this well-known poison was found by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to exceed the legal limit in fifteen percent of the nation’s poultry.

Sodium nitrate and sodium nitrite, chemicals used as preservatives to slow down putrefaction in cured meat and meat products, including ham, bacon, bologna, salami, frankfurters, and fish, also endanger health. These chemicals give meat its bright-red appearance by reacting with pigments in the blood and muscle. Without them, the natural grey-brown colour of dead meat would turn off many prospective consumers.

Unfortunately, these chemicals do not distinguish between the blood of a corpse and the blood of a living human, and many persons accidentally subjected to excessive amounts have died of poisoning. Even smaller quantities can prove hazardous, especially for young children or babies, and therefore the United Nations’ Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives warned, “Nitrate should on no account be added to baby food.” A. J Lehman of the FDA pointed out that “only a small margin of safety exists between the amount of nitrate that is safe and that which may be dangerous.”

Because of the filthy, overcrowded conditions forced upon animals by the livestock industry, vast amounts of antibiotics must be used. But such rampant use of antibiotics naturally creates antibiotic-resistant bacteria that are passed on to those who eat the meat. The FDA estimates that penicillin and tetracycline save the meat industry $1.9 billion a year, giving them sufficient reason to overlook the potential health hazards.

The trauma of being slaughtered also adds “poisons” (such as powerful stimulants) into the meat. These join with eliminated wastes in the animal’s blood, such as urea and uric acid, to further contaminate the flesh the consumers eat.

**Diseases In Meat**

In addition to dangerous chemicals, meat often carries diseases from the animals themselves. Crammed together in unclean conditions, force-fed, and inhumanely treated, animals destined for slaughter contract many more diseases than they ordinarily would. Meat inspectors attempt to filter out unacceptable meats, but because of pressures from the industry and lack of sufficient time for examination, much of what passes is far less wholesome than the meat purchaser realises.

A 1972 USDA report lists carcases that passed inspection after the diseased parts were removed. Examples included nearly 100,000 cows with eye cancer and 3,966,302 cases of abscessed liver. The government also permits the sale of chickens with airsacculitis, a pneumonia like disease that causes pus-laden mucus to collect in the lungs. In order to meet federal standards, the chicken’s chest cavities are cleaned out with air-suction guns. But during this process diseased air sacs burst and pus seeps into the meat.
The USDA has even been found to be lax in enforcing its own low standards. In its capacity of overseeing federal regulatory agencies, the U.S. General Accounting Office cited the USDA for failure to correct various violations by slaughterhouses. Carcasses contaminated with rodents, faeces, cockroaches, and rust were found in meat-packing companies such as Swift, Armour, and Carnation. Some inspectors rationalise the laxity, explaining that if regulations were enforced, no meat-packers would remain open for business.

Nutrition Without Meat

Many times the mention of vegetarianism and veganism elicits the predictable reaction, “What about protein?” To this the vegetarian might well reply, “What about the elephant? And the bull? And the rhinoceros?” The ideas that meat has a monopoly on protein and that large amounts of protein are required for energy and strength are both myths. While it is being digested, most protein breaks down into its constituent amino acids, which are reconverted and used by the body for growth and tissue replacement. Of these twenty-two amino acids, all but eight can be synthesised by the body itself, and these eight “essential amino acids” exist in abundance in non-flesh foods. Dairy products, grains, beans, and nuts are all concentrated sources of protein. Cheese, peanuts, and lentils, for instance, contain more protein per ounce than hamburger, pork, or porterhouse steak. A study by Dr. Fred Stare of Harvard and Dr. Mervyn Hardinge of Loma Linda University made extensive comparisons between the protein intake of vegetarians and flesh-eaters. They concluded that “each group exceeded twice its requirement for every essential amino acid and surpassed this amount by large margins for most of them.”

For many Americans, protein makes up more than twenty percent of their diet, nearly twice the quantity recommended by the World Health Organisation. Although inadequate amounts of protein will cause loss of strength, excess protein cannot be utilised by the body; rather, it is converted into nitorgenous wastes that burden the kidneys. The primary energy source for the body is carbohydrates. Only as a last resort is the body’s protein utilised for energy production. Too much protein intake actually reduces the body’s energy capacity. In a series of comparative endurance tests conducted by Dr. Irving Fisher of Yale, vegetarians performed twice as well as meat-eaters. By reducing the non-vegetarians’ protein consumption by twenty percent, Dr. Fisher found their efficiency increased by thirty-three percent. Numerous other studies have shown that a proper vegetarian and vegan diet provides more nutritional energy than meat. Furthermore, a study by Dr. J. loteko and V. Kipani at Brussels University showed that vegetarians were able to perform physical tests two to three times longer than meat-eaters before exhaustion and were fully recovered from fatigue in one fifth the time needed by the meat-eaters.

The Hidden Cost Of Meat – The Myth of Scarcity

In his 1975 bestseller, The Eco-Spasm Report, futurist Alvin Toffler, author of Future Shock and The Third Wave, suggested a positive hope for the world’s food crises. He anticipated “the sudden rise of a religious movement in the West that restricts the eating of beef and thereby saves billions of tons of grain and provides a nourishing diet for the world as a whole.”

Food expert Francis Moore Lappe, author of the best selling Diet for a Small Planet, said in a television interview that we should look at a piece of steak as a Cadillac. “What I mean,” she explained, “is that we in America are hooked on gas-guzzling automobiles because of the illusion of cheap petroleum. Likewise, we got hooked on a grain fed, meat-centred diet because of the illusion of cheap grain.”

According to information compiled by the USDA, over ninety percent of all the grain produced in America is used for feeding livestock – cows, pigs, lambs, and chickens – that wind up on dinner tables. Yet the process of using grain to produce meat is incredibly wasteful. For example, information from the USDA’s Economic Research Service shows that we get back only one pound of beef for every sixteen pounds of grain.

In his book Proteins: Their Chemistry and Politics Dr. Aaron Althui notes that in terms of calorie units per acre, a diet of grains, vegetables, and beans will support twenty times more people than a diet of meat. As it stands now, about half the harvested acreage in America is used to feed animals. If the earth’s arable land were used primarily for the production of vegetarian foods, the planet could easily support a human population of twenty billion and more.

Facts such as these have led food experts to point out that the world hunger problem is largely illusory. Even now, we are already producing enough food for everyone on the planet, but unfortunately it is being allocated inefficiently. The crime of large corporate is to produce a long-term profit margin of exponential growth, not feed the worlds hungry. In a report submitted to the United Nations World Food Conference, Rene Dumont, an agricultural economist at France’s National Agricultural Institute, made this judgement: The overconsumption of meat by the rich means hunger for the poor. This wasteful agriculture must be changed – by the suppression of feedlots where beef are fattened on grains, and even a massive reduction of beef cattle.”

Living Cows Are an Economic Asset

It is quite clear that a living cow yields society more food than a dead one – in the form of a continuing supply of milk, cheese, butter, yoghurt and other high-protein foods. In 1971, Stewart Odend’hal of the University of Missouri conducted a detailed study of cows in Bengal and found that far from depriving humans of food, they ate only indelible remains of harvested crops (rice hulls, tops of sugarcane, etc.) and grass. “Basically,” he said, “the cattle convert items of little direct human value into products of immediate utility.” This should put to rest the myth that people are starving in India because they will not kill their cows. Interestingly enough, India seems to have surmounted its food problems, which have always had more to do with occasional severe drought or political upheaval than with cows which the Hindu’s regard as holy. A panel of experts at the Agency for International Development, in a statement cited in the Congressional Record for December 2, 1980, concluded, “India produces enough to feed all its people.”

If allowed to live, cows produce high quality, protein-rich foods in amounts that stagger the imagination. In America, there is a deliberate attempt to limit dairy production; nevertheless, a one time Representative Sam Gibbons of Florida reported to congress that the U.S. government was being forced to stockpile “mountains of butter, cheese, and nonfat dried milk.” He told his colleagues, “We currently own about 440 million pounds of butter, 545 million pounds of cheese, and about 765 million pounds of nonfat dried milk.” In fact, the 10 million cows in America provide so much milk that the government periodically releases millions of pounds of dairy products for free distribution to the poor and hungry. It’s abundantly clear that cows (living ones) are one of mankind’s most valuable food resources.

 Movements to save seals, dolphins, and whales from slaughter are flourishing – so why shouldn’t there be a movement to save the cow? From the economic standpoint alone, it would seem to be a sound idea – unless you happen to be part of the meat industry, which is increasingly worried about the growth of vegetarianism and veganism. In June 1977, a major trade magazine, Farm Journal, printed an editorial entitled, “Who Will Defend the Good Name of Beef?” The magazine urged the nation’s beef-cattle raisers to chip in $40 million to finance publicity to keep beef consumption and prices sky high.
physiological, economic, and ecological arguments supporting vegetarianism, but it was firsthand experience of man’s cruelty to animals that
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Gandhi
"I have no doubt that it is part of the destiny of the human race, in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals."

Environmental Damage
Another price we pay for meat-eating is degradation of the environment. The United States Agricultural Research Service calls the heavily
contaminated runoff and sewage from America’s thousands of slaughterhouses and feedlots a major source of pollution of the nation’s rivers and
meats industry. It is fast becoming apparent that the fresh water resources of this planet are not only becoming polluted but also depleted, and
the meat industry is particularly wasteful. In their book Population, Resources, and Environment, Paul and Anne Ehrlich found that to grow one
pound of wheat requires only 60 pounds of water, whereas production of a pound of meat requires anywhere from 2,500 to 6,000 pounds of
water. And in 1973 the New York Post uncovered this shocking misuse of a valuable national resource—one large chicken slaughtering plant in
America was found to be using 100 million gallons of water daily! This same volume would supply a city of 25,000 people.

Social Conflict
The wasteful process of meat production, which requires far larger acreages of land than vegetable agriculture, has been a source of economic
conflict in human society for thousands of years. A study published in Plant Foods for Nutrition reveals that an acre of grains produces five
times more protein than an acre of pasture set aside for meat production. An acre of beans or peas produces ten times more, and an acre of
spinach twenty-eight times more protein. Economic facts like these were known to the ancient Greeks. In Plato’s Republic the great Greek
philosopher Socrates recommended a vegetarian diet because it would allow a country to make the most intelligent use of its agricultural
resources. He warned that if people began eating animals, there would be need for more pasturing land. “And the country which was enough to
support the original inhabitants will be too small now, and not enough?” he asked of Glaucon, who relied that this was indeed true. “And so we
shall go to war, Glaucon, shall we not?” To which Glaucon replied, “Most certainly”.

It is interesting to note that meat-eating played a role in many of the wars during the age of European colonial expansion. The spice trade with
India and other countries of the East was an object of great contention. Europeans subsisted on a diet of meat preserved with salt. In order to
disguise and vary the monotonous and unpleasant taste of their food, they eagerly purchased vast quantities of spices. So huge were the
fortunes to be made in the spice trade that governments and merchants did not hesitate to use arms to secure sources.

In the present era there is still the possibility of mass conflict based on food. Back in August 1974, the CIA published a report warning that in
the near future there may not be enough food for the world’s population “unless the affluent nations make a quick and drastic cut in their
consumption of grain-fed meats.”

Saving Money with a Vegetarian and Vegan Diet
But now let’s turn from the world geopolitical situation, and get right down to our own wallets. Although not widely known, grains, beans, and
milk products are an excellent source of high-quality protein and valuable nutrients. Pound for pound many vegetarian foods are better sources
of these essential nutrients than meat. A 100-gram portion of meat contains only 20 grams of protein. (Another fact to consider: meat is more
than 50% water by weight.) In comparison, a 100-gram portion of cheese or lentils yields 25 grams of protein, while 100 grams of soybeans
yields 34 grams of protein. But although meat provides less protein, it costs much more. A spot check of supermarkets in Los Angeles in
August 1983 showed sirloin steak costing $3.89 a pound, while staple ingredients for delicious vegetarian meals averaged less than 50 cents a
pound—now, compare these prices with that of today’s! An eight ounce container of cottage cheese costing 59 cents provides 60% of the
minimum daily requirement of protein. Becoming a vegetarian or vegan could potentially save an individual shopper at least several hundred
dollars each year, thousands to dollars over the course of a lifetime. The savings to America’s consumers as a whole would amount to billions
dollars annually. Considering all this, it’s hard to see how anyone could afford not to become a vegetarian or vegan.

Do Unto Others …
“I have no doubt that it is part of the destiny of the human race, in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals.”— Thoreau

“I do feel that spiritual progress does demand at some stage that we cease to kill our fellow creatures for the satisfaction of our bodily wants.”—Gandhi

Each year about 134 million mammals and 3 billion birds are killed for food in America. But few people make any conscious connection
between this slaughter and the meat products that appear on their tables. A case in point: in television commercials a clown called Ronald
McDonald used to tell kiddies that hamburgers grow in “hamburger patches.” The truth is not so pleasant—commercial slaughterhouses are
like visions of hell. Screaming animals are stunned by hammer blows, electric shock, or concussion guns. They are then hoisted into the air by
their feet and moved through the factories of death on mechanised conveyor systems. Often still alive, their throats are sliced and their flesh is
cut off. Describing his reaction to a visit to a slaughterhouse, champion tennis player Peter Burwash wrote in his book A Vegetarian Primer: “I’m
no shrinking violet. I played hockey until half of my teeth were knocked down my throat. And I’m extremely competitive on a tennis court … But
that experience at the slaughterhouse overwhelmed me. When I walked out of there, I knew I would never again harm an animal! I knew all the
physiological, economic, and ecological arguments supporting vegetarianism, but it was firsthand experience of man’s cruelty to animals that
Ancient Greece and Rome

Ethical considerations have always attracted many of the world’s greatest personalities to adopt a vegetarian diet. Pythagoras, famous for his contributions to geometry and mathematics, said, “Oh, my fellow men, do not defile your bodies with sinful foods. We have corn, we have apples bending down the branches with their weight, and grapes swelling on the vines. There are sweet-flavoured herbs, and vegetables which can be cooked and softened over the fire, nor are you denied milk or thyme-scented honey. The earth affords a lavish supply of riches, of innocent foods, and offers you banquets that involve no bloodshed or slaughter; only beasts satisfy their hunger with flesh, and not even all of those, because horses, cattle, and sheep live on grass.” Sheep and fowls aside, is it not suspicious that of all the animals on the planet the ones that are considered to be the most intelligent and gentle are those that subsist on a vegetarian diet? The biographer Diogenes tells us that Pythagoras ate bread and honey in the morning and raw vegetables at night. He would also pay fishermen to throw their catch back into the sea.

In an essay titled “On Eating Flesh,” the Roman author Plutarch wrote: “Can you really ask what reason Pythagoras had for abstaining from flesh? For my part I rather wonder both by what accident and in what state of mind the first man touched his mouth to gore and brought his lips to the flesh of a dead creature, set forth tables of dead, stale bodies, and ventured to call food and nourishment the parts that had a little before bellowed and cried, moved and lived. How could eyes endure the slaughter when throats were slit and hides flayed and limbs torn from limbs? How could his nose endure the stench? How was it that the pollution did not turn away his taste, which made contact with sores of others and sucked juices and serums from mortal wounds? It is certainly not lions or wolves that we eat out of self-defence; on the contrary, we ignore these and slaughter harmless, tame creatures without stings or teeth to harm us. For the sake of a little flesh we deprive them of sun, of light, of the duration of life to which they are entitled by birth and being.”

He then delivered this challenge to flesh-eaters: “If you declare that you are naturally designed for such a diet, then first kill for yourself what you want to eat. Do it, however, only through your own resources, unaided by cleaver or cudgel or any kind of ax.”

Da Vinci, Rousseau, Tolstoy …

The great Renaissance painter, inventor, sculptor, and poet Leonardo de Vinci epitomised the ethical approach to vegetarianism. He wrote, “He who does not value life does not deserve it.” He considered the bodies of meat-eaters to be “burial places,” graveyards for the animals they eat. His notebooks are full of passages that show his compassion for living creatures. He lamented, “Endless numbers of these animals shall have their little children taken from them, ripped open, and barbarously slaughtered.”

French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau was an advocate of natural order. He observed that the meat-eating animals are generally more cruel and violent than herbivores. He therefore reasoned that a vegetarian diet would produce a more compassionate person. He even advised that butchers not be allowed to testify in court or sit on juries.

In The Wealth of Nations economist Adam Smith proclaimed the advantages of a vegetarian diet. “It may indeed be doubted whether butchers’ meat is anywhere a necessary of life. Grain and other vegetables, with the help of milk, cheese, and butter, or oil, where butter is not to be had, afford the most plentiful, the most wholesome, the most nourishing, and the most invigorating diet. Decency nowhere requires that any man should eat butchers’ meat.”

Consider this little thought provoker: humans cannot exist on a diet of meat and water alone as can the flesh-eating beasts, but humans can exist, thrive and be bountifully nourished many times over on a diet of nothing more than vegetables, grains and nuts and dairy. Why then have we made the eating of dead flesh so vitally crucial to the survival of the human race above that of edible vegetation?

Similar considerations motivated Benjamin Franklin, who became a vegetarian at age sixteen. Franklin noted “greater progress, from that greater clearness of head and quicker apprehension.” In his autobiographical writings, he called flesh-eating “unprovoked murder.”

The gifted poet Shelley was a committed vegetarian. In his essay A Vindication of Natural Diet, he wrote, “Let the advocate of animal food force himself to a decisive experiment on its fitness, and as Plutarch recommends, tear a living lamb with his teeth and, plunging his head into its vitals, slake his thirst with the steaming blood…then, and then only, would he be consistent.” Shelley’s interest in vegetarianism began when he was a student at Oxford, and he and his wife, Harriet, took up the diet soon after their marriage. In a letter dated March 14, 1812, his wife wrote to a friend, “We have forewarned meat and adopted the Pythagorean system.” Shelley, in his poem Queen Mab, described a Utopian world where men do not kill animals for food. — “…no longer now
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face,
And horribly devours his mangled flesh,
Which, still avenging Nature’s broken law,
Kindled all putrid humors in his frame,
All evil passions, and all vain belief,
Hatred, despair, and loathing in his mind,
The germs of misery, death, disease and crime…”

The Russian author Leo Tolstoy became a vegetarian in 1885. Giving up the sport of hunting, he advocated “vegetarian pacifism” and was against killing even the smallest living things, such as the ants. He felt there was a natural progression of violence that led inevitably to war in human society. In his essay “The First Step,” Tolstoy wrote that flesh-eating is “simply immoral, as it involves the performance of an act which is contrary to moral feeling – killing.” By killing, Tolstoy believed, “man suppresses in himself, unnecessarily, the highest spiritual capacity – that of sympathy and pity towards living creatures like himself – and by violating his own feelings becomes cruel.”

Composer Richard Wagner believed that all life was sacred. He saw vegetarianism as “nature’s diet,” which could save mankind from violent tendencies and help us return to the “long-lost Paradise.”

At various times in his life, Henry David Thoreau was a vegetarian. Although his own practice of vegetarianism was spotty at best, he recognised its virtues. In Walden he wrote, “Is it not a reproach that man is a carnivorous animal? True, he can and does live, in a great measure, by preying on other animals; but this is a miserable way – as any one who will go to snaring rabbits, or slaughtering lambs, may learn—and he will be regarded as a benefactor of his race who shall teach man to confine himself to a more innocent and wholesome diet. Whatever
The Twentieth Century

It goes without saying that the great twentieth-century apostle of non-violence Mohandas Gandhi was a vegetarian. His parents, being devout Hindus, never gave him meat, fish, or eggs. Under British rule, however, there was a great attack on the age-old principles of Indian culture. Under such pressures, many Indians began to adopt the meat-eating habits of the West. Even Gandhi fell victim to the advice of some school friends, who urged him to eat meat because it would increase his strength and courage. But he later resumed a vegetarian diet and wrote, “It is necessary to correct the error that vegetarianism has made us weak in mind, or passive in action. I do not regard flesh-foods as necessary at any stage.” He wrote five books on vegetarianism. His own daily diet included wheat sprouts, almond paste, greens, lemons, and honey. He founded Tolstoy Farm, a community based on vegetarian principles. In his Moral Basis of Vegetarianism Gandhi wrote, “I hold flesh-food to be unsuited to our species. We err in copying the lower animal world if we are superior to it.” He felt that ethical principles are a stronger support for lifelong commitment to a vegetarian diet than reasons of health. “I do feel,” he stated, “that spiritual progress does demand at some stage that we should cease to kill our fellow creatures for the satisfaction of our bodily wants.”

Playwright George Bernard Shaw first tried to become vegetarian at age twenty-five. “It was Shelley who first opened my eyes to the savagery of my diet,” he wrote in his autobiography. Shaw’s doctors warned that the diet would kill him. When an old man, he was asked why he didn’t go back and show them what good it had done him. He replied, “I would, but they all passed away years ago.” Once someone asked him how it was that he looked so youthful. “I don’t,” Shaw retorted. “I look my age. It is the other people who look older than they are. What can you expect from people who eat corpses?” On the connection between flesh-eating and violence in human society, Shaw wrote: “We pray Sundays that we may have light to guide our footsteps on the path we tread; we are sick of war, we don’t want to fight, and yet we gorge ourselves upon the dead.”

H.G. Wells wrote about vegetarianism in his vision of a future world, A Modern Utopia. “In all the round world of Utopia there is no meat. There used to be. But now we cannot stand the thought of slaughterhouses. And, in a population that is all educated, and at about the same level of physical refinement, it is practically impossible to find anyone who will hew a dead ox or pig … I can still remember as a boy the rejoicing over the closing of the last slaughterhouse.”

Nobel-prize-winning author Isaac Bashevis Singer became a vegetarian in 1962, at age fifty-eight. He said, “Naturally I am sorry now that I waited so long, but it is better later than never.” Singer has little patience with intellectual rationalisations for meat-eating. “Various philosophers and religious leaders tried to convince their disciples and followers that animals are nothing more than machines without a soul, without feelings. However, anyone who has ever lived with an animal — be it a dog, a bird, or even a mouse — knows that this theory is a brazen lie, invented to justify cruelty.”

Meat eating & human evolution: a review of research into diet and evolution

Ironically, our greatest achievement as a species may be applying our enlarged brain and our technology to recreating the diet we instinctively ate a million years ago.

Imagine the primordial jungle. Imagine many kinds of primates, including anthropoids (chimps, gorillas and early humans) foraging for fruits and protein-rich leaves in the canopy of the arboreal forest. This story begins more than 55 million years ago but it has been the life-long study of Dr. Katherine Milton, professor of anthropology at the University of California. Her quest for links between diet and evolution is shared by David Popovich, a doctoral student in nutritional sciences at the University of Toronto, who also sees a connection between diet and human development of vision, depth perception, memory, speech, dexterity and social behaviour.

We have been given the impression that our early ancestors were closer to carnivores than they were to plant eating animals. The degree of meat in the early hominid diet is a matter of controversy and the more conservative view sees evidence for including small amounts of meat in the ancestral diet through opportunistic foraging and scavenging. The ancestors in question lived long before any modern human predecessors. The National Geographic Society’s recent report on Neanderthal life in glaciated Europe, for example, cites evidence of cannabis and reliance on hunting for food. However, these primate cousins were relatively recent in hominid history. Our original ancestors predate them by eons, long before the last great ice age. The early hominids were much more similar to modern day chimpanzees and gorillas.

Most of us think of a chimp’s life as being fairly carefree. Dr. Milton was surprised when she was observing a troupe of chimps and noticed that, instead of sitting around in the tree branches and eating what was nearby, they hurriedly sought out specific foods, rejecting a number of delicious looking leaves in order to move on. When they found an acceptable specimen, they did not gorge themselves. Instead, they seemed driven to obtain a mixture of fruits and leaves from a variety of plant species. On the spot, Dr. Milton decided to devote her career to studying how these animals met their nutritional needs.

Chimps in the wild today face many challenges to obtaining a sufficient variety of plant material – similar challenges were likely faced by our distant ancestors. For starters, many plants have developed outer coatings to discourage hungry herbivores. These outer layers contain chemical compounds that taste terrible and sometimes are lethal.

In addition, the fibrous content of plants, which we call “fibre” or “roughage,” resists breakdown by mammalian digestive enzymes. Excessive intake of fibre is troublesome because when fibre goes undigested, it provides no energy for the feeder. The trick is to do a better job of digesting the fibre. At the University of Toronto, David Popovich has been studying the micro-nutrient content of the wild vegetation consumed by gorillas. He has found that much of the energy and nutrient value that gorillas are able to derive from such a diet comes from colonic fermentation. Their studies on human subjects have shown that humans may also be able to rely on colonic fermentation. Thus, a diet consisting of substantial quantities of fruits, vegetables and nuts – no pasta or starchy – will provide adequate protein, B-12 and amino acids (the building blocks of protein). Gorillas and chimpanzees have little trouble digesting cellulose thanks to the presence of the ciliate Troglydityla in their intestines. However, chimpanzees and gorillas in captivity begin to lose their Troglydityla when they are fed cooked food. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that humans lost their intestinal cilia when they started cooking with fire.

Another concern with such a diet is finding time to forage. Primates cannot concentrate on just a few plant sources because, even if the fibre could be well-digested, many plant foods are low in one or more of the required nutrients, such as vitamins or amino acids. Fruits tend to be rich in easily digested forms of carbohydrate and relatively low in fibre, and provide little protein. Given that primates in the arboreal canopy do not cultivate protein-rich beans and vegetables, they rely heavily on efficient access to a wide variety of preferred fruits and leaves to achieve
adequate protein.

Developing a better memory for the exact location of favoured trees, the shortest routes between them and a timetable for when they would likely be fruit-bearing would definitely favour survival. A larger brain would no doubt support these activities as well as group communication. Today, spider monkeys comb the forest for fruit by dividing into small, changeable groups. Their expanded mental capacity helps them recognize members of their own social unit and learn the meanings of different food-related calls.

The inherent complexities of the plant food niche could have been a factor in increasing the longevity of primates. Neither apes nor humans can rely on their relatively poor senses of taste and smell to detect toxicity, so they require several years of adolescence to learn which foods are safe and nutritious. This may be why humans are one of the longest living animals on earth.

Dr. Milton claims that the crafty Homo sapiens were better equipped to solve the dietary problems wrought by changing environmental conditions. Expansion of brain power in combination with growth in body size and reduction in the jaw and teeth, are evidence of achievement of a high quality diet. Without the high quality diet, the increased body size simply produces a slow moving, fairly sedentary and unsociable ape, like present-day orangutans and gorillas. Dental patterns among fossils of hominids support evidence of a high quality, plant-based diet. The decreased mass of the jaw and teeth signify that either our ancestors were eating less fibrous, easier-to-chew foods or they were processing them to remove material that would be hard to digest.

Some researchers have proposed that modification in dental structures resulted partly from specialization in hunting and scavenging. However, electron microscope examination of bones collected from early hominid sites reveals that our ancestors most likely scavenged bones that were already ravaged by carnivores. While the amount of meat consumed by our distant ancestors is still hotly debated, there is consensus that the Pleistocene diet consisted overwhelmingly of vegetable material. While chimpanzees are known to kill, this behaviour is not necessarily dietary but ritualistic and their diet is at least 94% plants and fruits.

Wild chimps take in 100 grams of fibre each day, much more than the 10 grams or less that the average North American ingests today. Dr. Milton’s studies have shown that the chimpanzee gut is strikingly similar to the human gut in the efficiency with which it processes fibre. According to Dr. Milton, our digestive tract does not seem to be greatly modified from that of the common ancestor of apes and humans, which was undoubtedly a predominately herbivorous animal.

While there is no authoritative recommendation for the daily intake of fibre, the small amount ingested daily by most Canadians is far less than we need to remain healthy. According to David Popovich, captive gorillas are dying in zoos of the same arterial sclerosis afflicting human cardiac patients because the zoos are unaware of the gorillas’ reliance on fibre. Dr. David Jenkins, known as the father of the “fibre movement” in Canada and Director of the Clinical Risk Factor Modification Centre at St. Michael’s Hospital, continues to make a strong case for vegetarianism as the optimum human diet. – Veg.ca

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7 Reasons to Become Vegetarian. Why do people become vegetarians? There are many reasons which range from people wanting to be healthier to concerns with animal welfare. In this post, we’ll cover seven of the most popular reasons to make the switch. Let’s take a look.

#1 To lose weight for good. Vegetarians typically weigh less than meat eaters. Meat tends to come with a lot of extra unhealthy fats and cholesterol, causing excess weight with long-term consumption. One study conducted by Dr. Dean Ornish found that overweight people who ate a low-fat and vegetarian diet lost an average of 24 pounds in 30 weeks. The reason vegetarians and vegans have lower DHA levels in their blood, is that it’s extremely hard for the body to create the right kind of DHA from plant sources. [27],[28]. Luckily, vegetarians still consume some DHA through milk or eggs, but it’s often not enough to get sufficient levels in your body. If you’re switching to a vegan or vegetarian diet for health reasons, it’s very probable that you’re also cutting out junk food and that over time watching your weight.

When you’re switching to a vegan diet for health reasons, it’s very probable that you’re also cutting out junk food and that over time watching your weight. Over time, however, many essential nutrients are depleted on vegan diets. Vitamin B12 is a good example of this depletion.[69] For the first months, you might still have adequate vitamin B12 stores, after switching to a vegan diet. It’s true there are vegetarians and vegans who give these things up because they don’t like them, or they give them up for ethical reasons but never liked them that much anyway. But there are plenty of us for whom that’s not the case. Liking meat (even really loving the taste, as is the case with me) does not compel one to eat it. I really love having sex with women.