

# Research/Plant Protein Fact Sheet

Manitoba Harvest Dietitian Kit

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Following a plant-based diet can have a different meaning to each one of us. Some may choose to avoid all meat and dairy and others may adopt these practices a couple days a week or still incorporate lean meats and fish into the diet. No matter what your approach, everyone can reap the benefits of a plant-based diet. Here are some important factors to keep in mind and share with your clients to ensure switching to a more plant-based style of eating remains well-balanced and full of key nutrients.

## Tips for Eating a Plant Based Diet

# 1

### Focus on Whole Foods

Aim to incorporate as many whole, minimally processed foods into your meals and snacks as possible. Highly processed foods often lack nutrition and can contain added sugars, and artificial ingredients.

# 2

### Plan Ahead

Knowing that obtaining protein at every meal can be challenging depending on where you are throughout the day, plan ahead by packing single serving containers of things like nuts and seeds, roasted chickpeas, and edamame. Cook a big batch of quinoa on Sunday's to use throughout out the week in salads and grain bowls.

# 3

### Vary Your Sources of Protein

Our bodies need 20 different amino acids to build protein, nine of which our bodies cannot make. We need to get the nine amino acids from our food, which is why they are considered "essential amino acids". Animal sources of protein contain all nine of these making them complete sources of protein. Some plant sources of protein contain all 9, such as quinoa, however to get the rest it's important for plant eaters to vary their plant protein sources to get the rest.

# 4

### Up the Greens

Vegetables like spinach contain non-heme iron (heme iron comes from animal proteins), and since it's not absorbed as easily as heme iron, you'll need more of it to help you meet your goals. Iron is key in the process of transporting oxygen in the body. When following a plant based diet choose a variety of sources like nuts, seeds, fortified grains, dark leafy greens, beans, and legumes. The recommended dietary allowance for adult males and for women over 50 is 8 milligrams per day. For women ages 19-50, the RDA is 18 milligrams per day.

# 5

### Redesign Your Plate

Fill at least half of your plate with produce, grains, or beans, and downsize your meat serving. Incorporate meals like stir-fry, grain bowls, and salads that incorporate seasonal salads for a variety of tastes and textures. Swap in chopped mushrooms or tofu for half of the ground meat you'd normally use in tacos or chili for a plant forward version.

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## Food for Thought

Adopting a plant-based diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and legumes, with minimal meat, dairy, and refined foods is naturally higher in nutrients, vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Health benefits that have been associated with eating this way range from mood improvement to disease prevention.



A plant-based diet is naturally low in saturated fat, high in fiber, and lower in added sugar than ones that include animal foods and processed foods. Studies have shown that the consumption of a vegetarian diet is associated with lower blood pressure.<sup>2</sup>



Studies have also shown that adhering to a plant-based diet helps to improve blood glucose levels in those who have diabetes or are prediabetic.<sup>3</sup>



A plant-based diet is high in antioxidants that fight inflammation and phytochemicals that help to regulate chemicals in the brain that control mood. Phytochemicals are compounds produced by plants and abundant in fruits, vegetables, grains and beans.



A study published in the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics evaluated 15 different plant-based diets and found that, on average, participants dropped about 7.48 pounds (and this includes those who didn't stick to the diets). The high-fiber content in a plant-based diet can lead to feelings of satiety, which may help with weight loss.



A study, published in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, examined the dietary data of about 209,000 adults over two decades and compared the heart disease risk posed by these three categories of plant-based diets. They found that the people who followed the healthy plant-based diet had the lowest risk for heart disease.<sup>4</sup>



A study published in Nature found that, by 2050, a projected 80% increase in global greenhouse gas emissions from food production can be avoided, if the global diet is an equal-parts mixture of the Mediterranean, pescetarian and vegetarian diets.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Yokoyama Y, Nishimura K, Barnard ND, et al. Vegetarian Diets and Blood Pressure A Meta-analysis. JAMA Intern Med. 2014;174(4):577–587. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2013.14547

<sup>3</sup>Yokoyama Y, Barnard ND, Levin SM, Watanabe M. Vegetarian diets and glycemic control in diabetes: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Cardiovascular Diagnosis and Therapy 2014;4(5):373-382. doi: 10.3978/j.issn.2223-3652.2014.10.04

<sup>4</sup><https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/the-right-plant-based-diet-for-you>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25383533>