



VEGETARIAN OR OMNIVOROUS DIET: PROS AND CONS

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Many people adopt a vegetarian or plant-based diet in an effort to improve their health, reduce their risk for disease or lose excess weight. However, not all vegetarian diets are nutritious. The "type" of foods you choose to include in your meal plan and the type you choose to avoid make a huge difference when it comes to health benefits. Whether you are an herbivore (plant only), carnivore (animal only) or omnivore (plant/-animal eater), a diet full of processed foods will not provide the health benefits you may be pursuing.

Let's look at some of the benefits/pros of a vegetarian or herbivorous diet:

- *Reduced disease risk
- *Longevity
- *Increased food variety
- *Improved weight control
- *Reduced food costs
- *Ethical treatment of animals
- *Friendly environmental impact

Of course, there are many different types of vegetarian diets. The lacto-ovo vegetarian avoids meats, poultry and seafood but will consume dairy and eggs. Ovo-vegetarians eat eggs but avoid dairy, meat and seafood. Lacto-vegetarians consume dairy but avoid eggs, meat and seafood.

Some of the cons/drawbacks of a vegetarian diet can include:

**Possible micronutrient deficiencies, such as zinc, vitamin B12, calcium, omega-3 fatty acids*

**Possible reduced satiety. Vegetarian diets can tend to be lower in calories, fat and protein.*

**Can be challenging to eat in many restaurants or even friends' houses*

**Some vegetarian foods can be heavily processed (more sodium, sugar and calories).*

**Possible increased exposure to herbicides and pesticides. Of course, a simple solution to this is to buy organic foods.*

In my opinion, eliminating plant or animal foods from our diet can result in deficiencies. Possibly, an omnivorous diet may benefit "most" people. What would be the possible benefits of an omnivorous diet?

**Omnivores get more cholesterol. This is necessary for production of digestive enzymes, critical hormones and fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K.*

**Plenty of amino acids for growth in children, healing wounds, formation of tooth enamel, connective tissue and bones.*

**Vitamins B1-B12 are readily available*

**Presence of carnosine, an amino acid that protects against diseases of aging (cancer, Alzheimer's, heart disease)*

Lastly, what are some of the drawbacks to an omnivorous diet?

**Omnivores generally have a higher BMI (body mass index)*

**Higher total cholesterol*

**Higher LDL-C*

**Higher glucose levels*

**Possibly, a higher risk of Ischemic heart disease and cancer*

Please note that all of the pros and cons for each diet type are not true for everyone. Becoming a vegetarian or being an omnivore can be a difficult choice to make. What matters most is what you value about your health and the environment. If animal welfare is a concern for you, then vegetarianism is for you. Whatever you choose, be aware of what you're eating and where it comes from.

IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH... IMPROVE YOUR LIFE!



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