



Path to wellness

With the plethora of benefits that a plant-based diet has for you, it's only wise to try and adapt this food philosophy

by NANDITA SHAH



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what to eat by instinct. A lion knows that he should eat meat and a cow knows that she should eat grass. But we humans eat anything that we have been taught to eat by our culture, society, restaurants, and advertisements. We have been taught that we are omnivores by an industry that wants to sell its products. So, what are the consequences? Everyone is getting sick!

Let us now examine what nature has designed us to eat. You don't have to try too hard to find the answer. It is obviously plants. Let's try to connect to our instincts. Imagine you are in a farm and you see luscious fruits and vegetables hanging from the trees, what would you feel like doing? Picking and eating, of course. These are foods that are instinctively our foods and if we eat accordingly, our bodies receive the nutrients it needs to function well.

Unfortunately, we do not respect nature's orders and actually defy them. And that's precisely the reason why diseases are so rampant. Have you noticed that vegetarians and non-vegetarians get the same diseases? That's because meat and milk have the same properties – high-protein, high-fat, and no fibre. When a non-vegetarian goes out to eat he is likely to order chicken and when a vegetarian goes out to, its paneer. To the body, they are the same – high protein, high fat and no fibre.

Say no to a high-protein diet

So what's wrong with high protein? We are told by so many that protein is the best, and more is better. But do you know anyone with a protein deficiency? Today we see lots of people with diseases stemming from protein excess. Gout, acidity, osteoporosis, chronic kidney disease and even cancers are just some examples. Animal proteins are toxic to the kidneys. Proteins break down into amino acids. Our body is alkaline, and an alkaline diet is best for the body. You can get all the protein you need from plant-based foods, such as beans, pulses, green leafy vegetables, nuts, seeds, millets, soy and more.

Avoid fatty foods

What's wrong with a high-fat diet? Fat is the main cause of most lifestyle diseases. It settles in our arteries slowing down blood flow resulting in blood pressure, heart issues, obesity and even diabetes. Whole plant based fats with fibre such as nuts, seeds, avocados are far healthier options.

Add more fibre

Only plants have fibre. There is no fibre in any animal product. Even refined plant foods like oil, sugar, white rice or white flour lack it. The fibre found in whole plant foods acts like a broom cleansing our body internally. Fibre is nature's protection mechanism. It slows fats and sugars entering the bloodstream. Plus when you eat fibrous foods, you feel satisfied sooner and hence do not overeat.



What is good food? The answer may be different for different people. To a foodie, it may mean something that is tasty or exotic. To a fitness freak, it could mean a high-protein meal, and to a weight watcher, it may simply mean a low-fat diet. To me, good food is food with high nutritive value. Nutrients are the spare parts for healing, and I believe that high-quality food is a better healer than any medicine in the world. So let me give you some food for thought.

What do I mean by high-quality food? Even that holds a different connotation for different species. To a cow, it is grass, and to a lion, it is meat. Every species knows



Don't you think that if we put the wrong food in our bodies it's a little bit like giving grass to a lion or meat to a cow? It doesn't work. No wonder we are sick! If you have a car that runs on petrol, would you put diesel into it? Our body has a lot more reserve than a car's engine and so when we consume wrong foods we can get by for a number of years until the body finally gives up and we end up with diseases.

You may have heard the old saying let food be thy medicine and medicine thy food. As nutrients are the spare parts for healing, the correct food can actually help heal and the wrong food can naturally come in the way of healing because the body has to deal with it first. Today we rely a lot on medications. Yet have you noticed that as far as lifestyle diseases are concerned, medicines never cure? A patient with diabetes or high blood pressure may be taking medicines but rarely gets cured. Over a period of time, the dosage of medicines only grows.

Ever since I understood that the secrets of healing lie in both food and lifestyle, I have helped many people reverse diseases that are generally considered incurable. In the forthcoming issues, we will explore other aspects of good food and how you can eat delicious foods that help you heal all the time.

Dr Nandita Shah is the founder of SHARAN, an organisation devoted to disease reversal through food. For the past 14 years, she has presented the health workshops in India, and all over the world, inspiring others to make dietary and lifestyle changes resulting in positive health. She is also the author of the book Reversing Diabetes in 21 Days.

Green smoothie

Green smoothies are an energising way to start your morning and incorporate the goodness of greens with the sweetness of the fruit. To whip up a delicious green smoothie, mix about 1/3 or less green leaves and 2/3 fruit and a bit of water. You could add ginger, mint, lemon zest for flavour. Smoothies should not be strained. Do not add melons, vegetables (except green leaves), nuts or seeds.

It's best to alternate between different kinds of greens, such as spinach, mint, coriander, celery greens, spring onion greens, pak choy, beetroot greens, basil, betel leaves. Bananas, mangoes, papaya, chikoo, grapes, passionfruit and other pulpy fruits make good smoothies. Here is a simple recipe to kick start your smoothie journey:

Ingredients

2 ripe bananas or equivalent frozen bananas
A large handful of greens
1/4 cup water

Place the green leaves in a blender with enough water. Blend till you get a smooth green soup-like consistency. Add the bananas and other fruits. Throw in a couple of ice cubes if needed. Enjoy!

Variations

- Replace banana with other fruits. Mangoes are a delicious addition in this season.
- Add a quarter lime – skin and get the goodness of lemon zest.
- Add a small piece of ginger to get a bit of zing.
- Add one passionfruit – a super passionate twist.
- Add a handful of basil instead of spinach for a banana basil blast!