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## The Path to a Plant-Forward Diet

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As the health and wellness industries have boomed over the past several years, a plethora of fad diets have come and gone promising unprecedented results while rarely delivering sustainable success. Many of these diets, such as the Paleo Diet, Ketogenic Diet, and Whole 30 focus almost entirely on food groups that you cannot eat, which makes long-term success difficult.

*A better way to eat exists: choosing a plant-forward diet offers a clearer path to a healthier future.*

### Why eat a plant-forward diet?

Years of scientific research have revealed mountains of evidence that link plant-forward diets with better health outcomes. Plant-forward diets are generally lower in potentially harmful nutrients such as saturated fat, dietary cholesterol, and sodium and higher in beneficial nutrients including unsaturated fats, dietary fiber, and several vitamins and minerals. These types of helpful nutrients are linked to the following outcomes:

- Reducing saturated fat and cholesterol lowers risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and colorectal cancer.
- Lowering sodium consumption reduces the risk of hypertension and heart disease.
- Increasing unsaturated fats while decreasing saturated fats reduces LDL (bad cholesterol) and raises HDL (good cholesterol).
- Eating more fiber improves overall GI health and helps with digestion, regularity, and normalizing blood sugar.

### What is a plant-forward diet?

A plant-forward diet emphasizes the wonderful and powerful plant foods available in our farmer's markets, groceries, and convenience stores. A plant-forward diet emphasizes the following food groups:

- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Whole Grains
- Beans
- Legumes

It also can include meat, fish, poultry, eggs, and dairy, though these should be eaten in moderation.

### **How can I start eating a plant-forward diet?**

There are so many fantastic and easy ways to start a plant-forward diet. Below are a few suggestions to get you started:

- Swap plant-based protein sources for meat
  - Beans, whole grains, tofu, nuts, and legumes pack a strong protein punch, are low in saturated fats, and are good sources of dietary fiber and many beneficial minerals
- Make more room for plants on your plate
  - Eating smaller portions of meat, poultry, and dairy allows you fill up on plants to power through your day
  - One serving of meat is roughly the size of your fist
  - Fill the rest of your plate with vegetables, whole grains, and legumes
- Discover new foods by eating the rainbow throughout the day
  - Eating the rainbow builds variety in your diet and helps you discover new foods and flavors and provides an array of vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients
    - Red: peppers, watermelon, tomatoes, kidney beans, strawberries, raspberries, beets
    - Orange: carrots, peppers, oranges, papaya, butternut squash
    - Yellow: pineapple, peppers, peaches, nectarines, bananas, summer squash
    - Green: spinach, romaine, asparagus, brussels sprouts, kale, swiss chard, mustard greens, collard greens, avocado, cucumber, zucchini
    - Blue-Violet: blueberries, blackberries, eggplant, red onion

### **Plant-Forward Meal Ideas**

- Breakfast:
  - Overnight oats with unsweetened almond milk, chia seed, flaxseed, nut butter, raisins, and cinnamon
  - Toasted whole wheat English muffin or whole grain bread with avocado, tomato, and red chili flakes
  - Whole wheat breakfast wrap with nut butter, banana, and berries
- Lunch:
  - Tofu, roasted vegetable, and pesto sandwich on whole grain bread
  - Lentil soup with whole wheat roll; spinach, cherry tomato, cucumber, red onion, shredded carrot, and chickpea salad with balsamic vinaigrette
  - Quinoa salad with black and red beans, diced tomatoes, and parsley
- Dinner:
  - Vegetarian chili served over roasted spaghetti squash
  - Whole wheat pasta with cannellini beans, mushrooms, tomatoes, garlic, and onions alongside sautéed spinach
  - Tofu tacos with brown rice and black and red beans
- Snacks:
  - Cut-up vegetables with guacamole or hummus
  - Dry roasted, unsalted nuts
  - Ants on a log (celery, nut butter, and raisins)
  - Banana with nut butter and cinnamon

### **If you decide to reduce the amount of animal foods that you eat :**

Ensure that your diet includes sufficient amounts of zinc, iron, and vitamin B12. Great plant-based sources of these nutrients include whole grains, tofu, tempeh, legumes, mushrooms, nuts, and seeds.

References:

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