**Q.** What are some health benefits of eating more plant-based foods?

# ASK THE Wellness DOCTOR

**A.** Eat more fruits and vegetables. Load up on leafy greens. Choose whole foods. Follow a plant-based diet. You've heard the advice before. But does eating this way really make a difference? Yes, yes it does.[1]

Here are FIVE reasons to eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, and legumes...

## 1. Support weight management

Fruits, vegetables, and other plant-based foods are low in calories and high in vitamins, antioxidants, and other nutrients. Eating more plant-based foods can support weight management and help control hunger.

## 2. Control blood sugar levels

Plant-based foods with a low Glycemic Index take longer to digest and help control blood sugar levels. Research shows that following a plant-based diet can help treat and prevent type 2 diabetes.[2]

## 3. Improve heart health

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, yet it's largely preventable. Poor eating habits over time are a primary cause. In a Johns Hopkins University study, researchers found that people who ate the

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most plant-based foods cut their risk of dying from heart disease by 32 percent.[3]

## 4. Lower blood pressure

Your blood pressure should be less than 120/80. But what if it's not? You have elevated or high blood pressure. It's the leading risk factor for heart attacks and strokes. One recent study found that eating more plant-based foods lowers blood pressure and reduces the risk for heart attack, stroke, and early death.[4]

## 5. Prevent cancer

After heart disease, cancer is the leading cause of death in the United States. But eating more plant-based foods can dramatically lower the risk for cancer and other diseases. One study found that eating 7.5 fruits and vegetables a day lowered the risk of dying from cancer by 13 percent.[5]

## Hungry for better health?

Eat more plant-based foods. This includes:

- Fruits and vegetables: Berries, broccoli, citrus fruits, spinach, etc.
- Whole grains like brown rice, steel-cut oats, and whole-grain bread.
- Legumes like lentils, black beans, and pinto beans.
- Nuts. Try unsalted walnuts, almonds, and cashews.
- Seeds. Try pumpkin, ground flax, and sesame.

You don't have to become a vegetarian or a vegan. But eating more plant-based foods will improve your health, lower your risk for disease, and help you feel better.

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### References

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