Meatless Monday: Protect Your Health, One Day Each Week

As rates of obesity, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension, and other life-threatening conditions skyrocket in the United States, many researchers and medical experts come to the same conclusion: eating less meat can prevent—and even reverse—many of the nation's most commons illnesses.

**Obesity**
- Those eating less meat have significantly lower body mass indices. A plant-based diet is a great source of fiber, absent in animal products. Eating fiber makes you feel full with fewer calories.
- Avid meat eaters gained more weight over 5 years than those who ate less meat but the same amount of calories. When the researchers looked at different types of meat, they found the strongest association with weight gain was poultry, followed by processed meats and red meat.

**Heart Disease and Diabetes**
- Eating high quantities of fatty red and processed meats substantially increases the risk of death from heart disease (and cancer). Reducing saturated fats can help lower cholesterol and reduce this risk, and fortunately, plant foods contain little to no saturated fats. Replacing meat with plant foods, even just once a week, can decrease mortality risk by up to 19%.
- The cholesterol found in eating an egg a day shortens a woman's life as much as smoking 5 cigarettes a day for 15 years (or 25,000 cigarettes).
- Choosing vegetarian foods can reduce risk of metabolic syndrome, a cluster of disorders associated with a heightened risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

**Cancer**
- At least 33% of annual cancer deaths in the US are due to dietary factors. Studies show that consumption of red meat increases colon cancer risk and processed meat increases colorectal cancer risk; in addition, meat may be treated with carcinogenic preservatives.
- A British study of more than 35,000 women showed that those who ate the most meat had the highest breast cancer risk.

**Women’s/Men’s Health**
- Up to 8 million US women—1 out of 9—suffer from painful and persistent urinary tract infections (UTI) each year. Studies have linked these UTIs to a newly antibiotic-resistant strain of E. coli, believed to spread through poultry raised with the routine use of antibiotics.
- Scientific evidence shows that animal protein can also cause problems for men—including impotence, prostate and penile cancer, smaller penis size, breast growth, and infertility.

**Public Health**
- Factory farmed animals receive 80% of antibiotics sold in the US. They are given the antibiotics to promote growth and minimize illnesses that are easily spread in conditions of intensive confinement. Resulting antibiotic-resistant bacterial strains, such as salmonella, E.coli, and listeria, are increasingly found in animal products and jeopardize the ability of antibiotics to treat humans.
- Intensively confining and overcrowding animals creates ideal environments for the mutation and transmission of deadly viruses such as bird flu and swine flu.


