

# Advantages and disadvantages of being a vegetarian



Today, vegetarian diet has gained extreme popularity all over the globe. It is preferred by a number of people throughout the world. It is said that a vegetarian diet is a key to healthy life. Some organizations working for the animal rights are strictly against eating meat, fish or poultry. Vegetarian diet typically consists of whole grains, vegetables and fruits. They are, no doubt, good for health. But have you ever thought whether vegetarian meals are complete? Can it fulfill all the nutritional requirements of the body? Well, there are certain advantages and disadvantages of being vegetarian.

What are they? Advantages Vegetarian diet mainly includes grains, nuts, cereals, seeds, beans, vegetables and fruits. Hence, it is rich in fiber, folate and vitamin C. Vegetables and fruits provide vitamins and minerals that are essential for a healthy body. Beans, tofu, seeds are some good sources of proteins. Vegetables consist of phytochemicals, which prevent some chronic diseases. Green leafy vegetables are the rich source of antioxidants. Vegetables and fruits also provide natural sugars, beneficial enzymes and trace elements.

It contains low amount of fats, cholesterol and saturated fats. As a result, it minimizes the risk of weight gain. This, in turn, reduces the possibilities of developing the health problems caused by obesity. Vegetarian diet is also helpful for healthy weight loss. A vegetarian diet lowers the blood cholesterol levels and decreases the risk of various disorders such as high blood pressure, stroke, heart diseases, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoporosis, kidney diseases, gallstones and cancer. Due to intake of high fiber diet, digestive health is improved.

Vegetarianism protects you from certain food-borne diseases such as bird flu, mad cow disease, intestinal parasites, etc. Disadvantages Although vegetarian diet provides all the essential nutrients, there are certain factors that we can get in more amounts from the meat or fish. Vegetarian diet is found to be low in proteins, calcium, vitamin B12, iron and zinc. Vitamin B12 is found in soy products, fortified cereals and animal products in abundant amount. Meat is considered as the major source of vitamin B12. Soymilk, milk and other dairy products are the rich sources of vitamin D.

Meat, chicken, fish and poultry contain more quantities of iron and zinc. Milk, cheese and yogurt are excellent sources of calcium. These nutrients are not found in large quantities in the vegetarian diet. Meat is a rich source of proteins and contains all the essential amino acids required by the body. Phosphorus present in the meat is easily absorbed than that present in legumes and cereals. Vegetarian diet is not recommended for bodybuilders, as they require a protein-rich diet. A diet lacking in sufficient carbohydrates and proteins can lead to anemia.

Bowel irregularities can be commonly seen among the vegetarians. If your diet is totally free from fats, then it's not good, because certain amounts of cholesterol and fat is necessary for the development of the nervous system and normal body functioning. Although, there are certain disadvantages of vegetarian diet, it definitely offers a number of health benefits. If you properly plan your diet, you can overcome the problem of nutrient deficiencies and improve your physical fitness and overall health. After all, healthy eating is a key to healthy living.