

## Plant-Based Diets Come with Many Benefits

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DENVER —

Plant-based diets have received much attention recently, with more celebrities making the change and countless books touting their benefits. Recent research has shown that plant-based diets are associated with lower incidence of stroke, heart attack and many forms of cancer as well as increased life expectancy and fertility.

“More and more research is suggesting that one of the best things you can do for your heart and your overall health is to implement a plant-based diet,” said [Andrew Freeman, MD](#), cardiologist at National Jewish Health. “Many doctors do a great job of controlling disease but adopting a plant-based diet is a lifestyle change you can make to not only prevent, but offer a chance at a cure of disease.”

The two main types of plant-based diets are vegetarian and vegan. A vegetarian diet is simply a diet that does not include any meat. A vegan diet is a vegetarian diet that also excludes eggs, dairy products and all other animal-derived ingredients. Dr. Freeman follows a vegan diet.

“While potato chips and soda would technically qualify as a plant-based diet, that is not what we’re advocating,” said Dr. Freeman. “Your diet should be well balanced, with low-fat plant foods, including whole grains and plants.”

On average, plant-based diets are lower in calories and more dense in nutrients. The bulk of calories in a balanced diet come from whole grain starches mixed with vegetables, some fruit and legumes (beans, lentils, peanuts, etc.). One caveat with plant-based diets is that they often lack B12 vitamins, but most soy and almond milks are supplemented with B12. Dr. Freeman says a sample daily plant-based diet could look like:

**Breakfast:** Oatmeal (made with water) or 100 percent whole grain bread with sliced fruit

**Lunch:** Sandwich with 100 percent whole grain bread, peanut or almond butter and preserves or hummus with vegetables.

**Dinner:** Brown rice, black beans and vegetables—a healthy burrito bowl, as an example. Skip popular toppings such as sour cream, cheese and meat.

“Meals like this are satisfying, filling and very nutrient-dense,” said Dr. Freeman. He recommends doing your research and checking with your physician before jumping into any plant-based diet. Make sure you understand how to get the right mix of vitamins and nutrients as well as adequate amounts of protein. There are many resources available online and in books and videos that can help you plan a healthy, plant-based diet.

Try some [healthy recipes](#) approved by National Jewish Health registered dietitians.

**National Jewish Health** is known worldwide for treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders, and for groundbreaking medical research. Founded in 1899 as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health remains the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to these disorders. Since 1998, *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked National Jewish Health the number one respiratory hospital in the nation.

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