



Why a flexitarian diet is good for you

Eating less meat is healthy for your heart and wallet, and the planet.

If you've dabbled in vegetarianism but can't resist the urge of a juicy burger or steak, "flexitarian" may be the right term to describe your diet.

A flexitarian diet includes plant-based vegetarian meals most of the time, with meat, chicken or fish enjoyed on occasion. It's estimated that up to 40% of North Americans are flexitarians, and the number is growing. With reported benefits to your health and the health of our planet, meatless meals make sense. Here are few things that you need to know about the flexitarian lifestyle.

Meat...whenever. There is no specific rule for how often a flexitarian will eat meat – it really depends on your personal choices. That's what makes it so flexible! A flexitarian is best described as someone who isn't ready to give up meat entirely, but wants to reduce consumption of animal-based foods.

It's heart healthy. Diets filled with meatless meals have been associated with a reduced risk of developing several chronic diseases, including high blood pressure, metabolic syndrome, diabetes and heart disease. Studies show that vegetarians live 3.6 years longer and weigh about 15% less than non-vegetarians.

It's good for you and good for... Your wallet. Your planet. Your animal friends. Lentils, beans and soy cost less than meat and fish. And choosing these plant-based foods is easier on the environment and leaves that lighter carbon footprint. Raising animals for meat causes more greenhouse gas emissions than farming beans.

You can get protein from other sources besides meat. If you are making meatless meals more often, be sure to use any of these nutritious, protein-rich and satisfying options: beans, peas, lentils, soy, eggs, milk, cheese, yogurt, nuts and nut butters, seeds and seed butters.

If you want to move towards a flexitarian diet, start by trying to cut out all meat one day a week.

Source : text: fmcoeur.ca - picture: unipoly.ch

Sleep



Sleep is not just a block of time when you are not awake. It is known that sleep has distinctive stages that cycle throughout the night. For example, certain stages are needed to help you feel rested and energetic the next day, and other stages increase your cognitive abilities, enhance your ability to learn new information, and improve memory.

Skimping on sleep has a price. Cutting back by even 1 hour can make it tough to focus the next day and slow your response time. Studies have shown that when you lack sleep, you are more likely to make bad decisions and take more risks. This can result in poor performance on the job or at school and a greater risk for an accident or car crash (some Canadian studies suggest that 15 to 25% of all car collisions involving bodily injury or fatality are attributed to driver fatigue).

Health

Sleep also is important for good health. Studies show that not getting enough sleep or getting poor quality sleep on a regular basis increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, and other medical conditions. In addition, during sleep, your body produces valuable hormones. These hormones help children grow and help adults and children build muscle mass, fight infections, and repair cells. The less people sleep, the more likely they are to be overweight or obese, develop diabetes, and prefer eating foods high in calories and carbohydrates. Getting enough sleep boosts the immune system and our ability to fight disease and endure sickness.

How Much Sleep Is Enough?

Sleep needs vary from person to person, and they change throughout one's lifecycle. Most adults need 7-8 hours of sleep each night. Not only does the quantity of your sleep matter, but the quality is important as well.

Sleep hygiene tips:

- Stick to a sleep schedule - Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
- Avoid caffeine and nicotine.
- Avoid alcoholic drinks before bed.
- Avoid large meals and beverages late at night.
- Relax before bed - for example, take a hot bath.
- Create a good sleeping environment. Get rid of distractions such as noises, bright lights, an uncomfortable bed, or a TV or computer in the bedroom.
- Daily physical exercise (such as walking briskly for 30 to 40 minutes) has beneficial effects on sleep.

Source : hc-sc.gc.ca