



As we watch the disaster that is occurring on the Gulf Coast, mostly due to human greed and negligence, we feel the pain for the future of many species, not only our own. If there was something we could do to reverse some of this damage, most of us would do it. It turns out there is something that each of us can do, today, which can help.

This simple action is to reduce the consumption of animal-based foods and products. Our dependence on animal consumption, like that of oil, must change if we want our future generations to enjoy their health on a healthy and beautiful planet. Money and other riches cannot free our children and grandchildren from our dependence upon other species and a healthy planet.

Animal consumption is an integral part of the American psyche. As one comedian would respond, "I do like animals; but I just like eating them more". The economic, political and social forces that support these industries are huge. Americans have their favorite meals, including "a thick, juicy steak", yogurt and berries, eggs and bacon, milk and cookies, ice cream with hot apple pie, cheese on a burger, and chicken several times per week (because white meat is allegedly better than red).

So, how much of a reduction would help? The answer is, the more the better. Eggs and dairy (milk-based products), the difference between vegetarian and vegan lifestyles, are often the last to go. Reducing even these products can have dramatic effects on health, environment and morale.

Reasons to Reduce Animal Consumption

Individual Health. Rates of most "degenerative" diseases of aging (and now of youth), as listed in the table are highly correlated with the amount of animal product that is consumed by an individual and their country, due to the toxic nature of their specific fats and proteins, and the calcium that is lost in processing their high protein content.

In addition, up to 90% of our meats are contaminated with feces due to sloppy processing; to such an extent that an American's kitchen is often more toxic than their toilet. Many meats are being irradiated with the equivalent of millions of xrays to control these dangerous bacteria that have developed due to factory farming. See the books by Robbins and Campbell for more information.

Planetary Health. American factory farms, which have developed over the last 50 years, require huge amounts of water, and generate huge amounts of solid, liquid and gaseous waste and bacterial contamination. Communities near factory farms have increased incidence of many illnesses. Other countries, as they become westernized and consume animal products, are converting their agriculture to livestock, which is resulting in loss of rain forests, requires up to 100 times more water and land for the equivalent amount of healthy food. One pound of farmed fish requires five pounds of ocean fish for feed, contributing to the depletion of the oceans. These practices are unsustainable. See Robbins' book for more information.

Morale/Humane. The American practice of crowding

animals into huge cement buildings (often with pastoral murals on the outside) have been outlawed by most European countries for years. Despite the regulation that 100% of animals are unconscious when carved or skinned, a significant percentage are still conscious. The argument that "cows are stupid" is countered by stories of cows walking 30 miles to find their calves, from which they are unnaturally separated on their first day of life. While veal consumption has declined by 65% over the past decade, this cruel practice of confining a young calf for its entire life still occurs. Pigs are highly intelligent and social, but raised in isolation with such cruelty that anyone who saw what went on would never eat another piece of bacon. Chickens are so cramped that they attack each other, requiring inhumane removal of their beaks and claws. We are systematically disconnected from our food sources—but does this relieve us of our responsibility to know what goes on and to take action?

Surmounting the Obstacles

Most Americans are both inspired and overwhelmed by information. As Colin Campbell discusses in his book, "The China Study", the industries that want to maintain the status quo do so by providing small bits of misinformation, enough to confuse and paralyze us. When we are confused, we give up and fall back to our old ways of being.

However, there are numerous books by quality authors which converge into a consistent conclusion about what we must do in order to heal ourselves and our planet. Colin Campbell grew up on a dairy farm; John Robbins grew up eating ice cream several times a day; Joel Fuhrman is a physician and was a pre-olympic athlete. In adulthood each learned about the toxic effect of animal products for humans and the planet. Their books thoroughly discuss the science, politics and economics of animal products. This information will help surmount

some of the most common barriers to changing lifestyles:

1. Fear of Lack of Protein, Calcium and Nutrients. American obsession with protein is the result of aggressive marketing by the animal food industry, and is not based on science. Joel Fuhrman demonstrates in his book "Eat to Live" that greens vegetables, per calorie (not per pound), have more protein than a burger. The argument about essential amino acid deficiency in plants is also not valid.

Cows don't get their calcium from milk, but from green grass (when fed properly). There is ample calcium in organic greens and grains (when the plants are grown on healthy soil). The same is true for most nutrients—they ultimately come from healthy soil.

Vitamin B12 is made by bacteria—in soil and in the gut. Deficiency occurs when soil is unhealthy, and when we are fed agents such as antibiotics and chlorine that kill these bacteria. Also, stress and acid-blocking medications (which many people take for years) reduces our ability to absorb B12. Therefore everyone, including meat eaters should be tested annually and supplement with B12, until tests demonstrate sufficiency.

| Conditions Increased by Animal Consumption* |
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| Alzheimers |
| Autoimmune Disease |
| Arthritis |
| Breast Cancer |
| Cataracts |
| Colon Cancer |
| Constipation** |
| Dementia |
| Depression** |
| Diabetes Type 1 |
| Diabetes Type 2 |
| GERD** |
| Glaucoma** |
| Heart Disease |
| High Cholesterol |
| High Blood Pressure |
| Multiple Sclerosis |
| Obesity |
| Osteopenia |
| Osteoporosis |
| Prostate Cancer |
| Vascular Disease |

* most conditions have an inflammatory component that is increased by animal consumption; see references
**not scientifically proven but a common experience

2. Social. It is indeed difficult to go to a restaurant, or have breakfast, without animal products in the cuisine. However, there are a growing number of restaurants that serve vegetarian options. Breakfast without milk and eggs usually can be a nut butter on a bagel, humus on rice crackers, or even a chili or vegetable soup. It gets easier to be creative and adaptive as time goes on. Some people bring alternatives with them, such as a healthy salad dressing or sunflower seeds to sprinkle on what otherwise would be a boring and unsatisfying salad.

Also, restaurant food is usually not organic. Commercial food production, whether plant or animal, is full of toxins and deficient in nutrients. Therefore, as we learn we become more selective in where we eat and how often; and follow such events with a detox of some sort.

While it's not advised to proselytize, if family or friends ask about your chosen restrictions, then take the opportunity to educate them on your reasons.

3. Feeling Sick When Not Eating Meat or Eggs. When someone detoxes from alcohol, drugs, or even sugar, they don't feel good. Their suffering would be relieved by re-introducing these compounds, but this is clearly counterproductive. "Cold turkey" is the body restoring healthy physiology. However, when we crave a steak, egg, or cheese, we interpret this as "needing" them for health. While the books on eating for blood type and others promote this view, there is no science that supports this dependency on animal product; in fact the science says the opposite. Joel Fuhrman's calls this experience "toxic hunger". On the other side of a detox, everyone feels better.

4. Boring and Difficult Cuisine. While it is true that animal products provide flavor and texture, many interesting flavors and textures can be provided by a mixture of vegetables, nuts, seeds and spices. For most, it is a matter of experimenting with new ways of shopping and cooking. The palate will change its habits. This is similar to people who have become used to too much salt or sugar. At first, everything seems to lack flavor; but as the systems re-set, new awareness of flavor emerges. There are a growing number of easy, family-friendly, wonderful recipe books, only a few of which are in the bibliography.

5. No Time for Shopping and Cooking. We have been programmed to believe that shopping and cooking is a loss of productive time. However, the "slow food" movement points out that the time we invest pays off. Preparing meals can be relaxing and an opportunity to wind down, talk with family and friends and listen to music (in addition to the benefit of knowing what you're eating). The time does not have to be excessive, and by planning and proper food-storing and freezing techniques, efficiency does increase. A simple strategy is to try one new recipe or technique every weekend; and to keep it fun. Successful meals accumulate over time and lead to a new, sustainable lifestyle.

6. Difficulty with vegetables and beans. The digestive system, like any system of the body, develops habits. When minimally exposed to fruits, vegetables, beans and fiber, the enzymes and other mechanisms needed for healthy digestion atrophy. However, with a gradual introduction of these foods, these systems will re-build. Supplementing with agents such as probiotics, enzymes, and acid can support the re-balancing of the digestive tract and reduce the gas and bloat that can occur if one changes too quickly.

Wheat and other glutinous grains (barley, spelt, rye, and some oat), and their derivatives (seitan, wheat gluten) is a growing problem for a significant part of our population,

probably due to over-exposure and commercial processing. Therefore, beginning with non-glutinous grains such as rice, quinoa and millet is recommended. Also avoiding highly processed soy-based meat-like substitutes, though less convenient, is a healthier strategy.

Support

While these changes are not easy, they feel good on many levels. Finding partners in family and friends makes this quest more satisfying. There are a growing number of clubs, web sites, and practitioners who can provide support.

Nutritional testing for deficiencies and allergies is available and can guide a plan. The ultimate goal is a lifestyle that is truly sustainable, morale, and healthy for the individual, family, our society and our planet.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This educational material may not be used to make decisions about medical care without the help of an experienced practitioner.

For More Information (Books followed by ISBN #'s)

- O See Dr. Cheikin's website, www.cheikin.com, for related articles on: An Inconvenient Life, Bone Health, as well as other topics and holistic health information.
- O Dr. Cheikin offers workshops in several holistic health topics for adults and children. Please call for more information.
- O Robbins, John: The Food Revolution: How Your Diet Can Help Save Your Life and Our World. Conari, 2001. 1573-247-022
- O Ballentine, Rudolph: Radical Healing: Integrating the World's Greatest Therapeutic Traditions... Three Rivers, 2000. 0609-804-847
- O Pitchford, Paul: Healing with Whole Food: Asian Traditions and Modern Nutrition, 3rd Ed. North Atlantic, 2002. 1556-434-308.
- O Fuhrman MD, Joel: Eat to Live. Little Brown 2003. ISBN 0316-829-445.
- O Fuhrman MD, Joel: Disease-Proof Your Child: Feeding Kids Right. St Martins, 2006. ISBN 0312-338-082
- O Peck, M. Scott: Road Less Traveled. New York: Touchstone, 1978 (1997). 0684-847-248
- O Boutenko Victoria: Green for Life. Raw Family Publishing, 2005. 0970-481-969. (also see her other books)
- O Cousens, Gabriel: Conscious Eating. North Atlantic, 2000. ISBN 1556-432-852.
- O Pollan, Michael: The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals. New York: Penguin Press 2006. 9781-5942-00823
- O Moskowitz, Isa: Vegan with a Vengeance: Over 150 Delicious, Cheap, Animal-Free Recipes... Da Capo, 2005. 1569-243-581.
- O Madison, Deborah: Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone (10th Anv Ed), Broadway, 2007. ISBN-10: 0767-927-478.
- O Ornish, Dean. See any of his books on change of diet and lifestyle.

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