



Why Everyone Should Eat More Plants

By Rich Roll
February 18 2014

There is a misconception that eating a plant-based diet is unnatural, the purview of activist radicals and the socially marginalized. Instead, I submit that it is beyond a doubt the most natural, healthy, and advisable thing you can possibly do to optimize your wellness and become bulletproof to Western disease.

Outrageous!

What's truly outrageous is just how sick we've become. We live in the most prosperous nation on Earth, and yet overall we've never been more unhealthy. Chronic illness is killing us and bankrupting our economy. One out of every three deaths in the US is caused by heart disease, America's #1 killer. A close second is cancer, killing one out of every four in the U.S. alone. 70% of Americans are obese or overweight. And by 2030, 50% of Americans will be diabetic or pre-diabetic. Total insanity.

How did we get here?

Of course the answer is complex, but the biggest contributor is what we eat. Currently, 94% of the calories consumed by the typical American eating the standard American diet are empty, lacking any true nourishment whatsoever, with only 6% of calories coming from fresh fruit, vegetables, whole grains, legumes and seeds.

Natural has become unnatural. Unnatural has become natural. We're completely upside down when it comes to food and health. And it's time for a change.

To right the ship, we must begin by confronting the reality that we're actually addicted to foods that are killing us. Atop the list are processed foods—soda, snacks, desserts and other packaged items laden with preservatives, saturated fat, sugar, fructose corn syrup, sodium, and other unnatural chemicals. Of course, we all know these foods are bad for us. And yet so many are powerless when it comes to giving them up.

Why?

Because many of these foods are specifically devised to activate the pleasure centers in our brain, enslaving us to habitual poor dietary choices—the very essence of addiction. When combined with our national preference for excessive meat and dairy intake, blood cholesterol escalates, clogging our arteries; our cells become cancerous; and our immune systems spiral out of control in response, creating a state of chronic inflammation. This confluence of factors creates a persistent condition in which our bodies become disease incubators, sentencing us to an almost certain future of chronic illness.

Even more outrageous? Standard operating procedure for treating these common chronic conditions—everything from high cholesterol to erectile dysfunction—is to prescribe medications that treat symptoms rather than address the root cause of the issue. Counsel and guidance to improve diet and exercise have been supplanted by Lipitor, Crestor, Viagra and countless other pharmaceuticals designed to quell the symptoms of every conceivable malady.

Taken as a whole, the aforementioned four conditions (heart disease, obesity, cancer and diabetes) account for approximately 75% of our current health care costs, to the tune of countless billions of dollars annually. This is simply not sustainable.

And yet the great irony is that so many chronic diseases (exempting certain cancers of course)—in fact 90% of all Western disease—need never exist in the first place.

It's time to reverse the trend. But how?

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Simple. Eat more plants. You might be surprised to learn that a plant-based diet is the only nutritional protocol known to man that has been shown to prevent—and in many cases, *actually reverse*, these four and many other chronic illnesses that unnecessarily plague us.

In the most simplistic terms, if America flipped the Standard American Diet so that we began getting 94% of our calories from fresh, whole plant-based foods (rather than current levels of 6%), most of our diseases would simply vanish. And our health care crisis would essentially repair itself.

I know it may sound daunting. *I can't imagine life without pizza! How can I possibly live without eggs?*

Going Vegan

Personally, I cannot emphasize enough how adopting a 100% PlantPower diet revolutionized my life. But I also realize not everyone is ready to jump in with both feet on Day One. I get it. I sympathize.

So I'm here to say, relax. Don't be afraid. Ease into it. And let go of the idea of perfection. Let it go.

This is not about deprivation. Instead, it's about a willingness to release old ideas you've harbored your whole life about what a healthy diet entails. It's about being open to the adventure of experimentation, exploring and rediscovering whole foods in their natural state. It's about developing an enhanced connection to and relationship with your body, learning to pay greater attention to the nexus between the foods you eat and how you feel and function. And ultimately, it's about developing a more acute intuition about what truly serves you, so you can reprogram yourself to make better choices that are in your best long-term interest physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

With each successive step along the path, you'll begin to notice changes. As your energy levels improve, your preferences will shift from empty calories to foods that actually nourish you. The more whole, plant-foods you incorporate into your routine, the more likely those unhealthy cravings will subside. And before you know it, that hankering for cheese might just vanish altogether.

Against all odds—and despite being a self-avowed junk-food junkie for most of my life—it happened for me. And I'm here to tell you that it can happen for you, too.

At the end of the day, there is only one rule: *eat more plants*. Because baby steps move mountains.

I'll leave you with this: Embracing a plant-based lifestyle didn't just repair my health. It was the key that unlocked my heart and allowed me to discover, embrace and unleash a better and more authentic version of myself on the world.

I wish only the same experience for you. Because we need more of who you really are.

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