



USDA: Quit Marketing Meat — You're Promoting Diabetes and Sickness

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At a time when meat prices are rising and meat consumption is falling in the United States, the USDA has been considering expanding a program that promotes meat consumption using a “checkoff” program. The Beef Checkoff Program is a producer-funded marketing and research program designed to increase domestic and/or international demand for beef. The Cattlemen's Beef Board and USDA oversee the collection and spending of checkoff funds. Undoubtedly, the 2011 USDA “MyPlate” nutrition guide, which did not specifically mention meat as a food staple, received the wrath of Big Cow, Big Chicken and Big Turkey and the government is trying to backtrack its move. A proposal to double the current \$80 million funding was entertained. Fortunately, the USDA received so many requests opposing this increase due to write in campaigns like the one PCRM organized that it has shelved it for now.

I hope to remind the USDA of the scientific foundation of arguments linking meat consumption and chronic diseases — in this case, the epidemic of diabetes.

1. In 1985, the [Adventist Mortality Study](#) analyzed the risk of diabetes in 25,000 vegetarians and meat eaters and found that women who ate red meat increased their risk of developing diabetes by 40%, and men who ate red meat increased their risk by 80%.
2. In 2008, the [Adventist Health Study-2](#) evaluated 8,401 people and found that long-term (17-year) weekly meat eaters were 74% more likely to develop diabetes as those who ate totally plant-based.
3. In an [analysis of meat consumption and diabetes](#), scientists found that for every 3.5 ounces of red meat consumed per day, diabetes risk increased 10%. And for every 1.75 ounces of processed red meat consumed per day (about the equivalent of one packaged hot dog), the risk increased 51%.
4. In the [Nurses' Health Study II](#), eating processed red meat more than five times a week increased the risk of diabetes by 91%; eating unprocessed red meat increased the risk by 59%.
5. The recent [EPIC-Interact study](#) found that every 10 grams of animal protein consumed daily

increased the risk of diabetes by 6%. (Keep in mind that 100 grams is 3.5 ounces, so this is a very small amount.)

6. In a [recent study](#) of over 100,000 participants, diabetes risk doubled in daily fish eaters compared with those who never ate fish.
7. Meat-based diets are [associated with higher levels of inflammatory markers](#) like hs-CRP, which are commonly found in patients developing diabetes.
8. Meat-based diets can have [excess amounts of the pro-oxidant iron and preservatives like nitrates](#), which damage tissues and result in insulin resistance.
9. [Substituting legumes for meat](#) improves blood sugar, insulin, cholesterol, and triglyceride levels.

The USDA took a step forward in 2011 when it abandoned MyPyramid, which recommended meat consumption, replacing it with MyPlate, which sports a food group labeled “protein.” The USDA indicates that beans, peas, nuts, seeds, and processed soy products can supply the protein portion of the plate. For the health of the nation and the environment, I hope that the USDA eliminates, rather than increases, the meat marketing funds.