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# conscious eating

## EATING SKINNY

### Why Vegans and Vegetarians are Naturally Trim

by Judith Fertig

We read the labels touting low sugar, carbs, fats and calories. We try this and that diet, hoping the pounds will melt away. Yet more than a third of U.S. adults, nearly 80 million of us, remain overweight or obese, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in Atlanta.

The problem might be that we're getting the wrong advice. While most weight-loss plans focus on reducing calories, recent research shows that vegan and vegetarian dietary patterns can result in more weight loss than those that include meat, without even emphasizing caloric restriction. Scientists at the University of South Carolina, in Columbia, point to their study, *How Plant-Based Do We Need to Be to Achieve Weight Loss?*

Study participants were divided into five groups, according to eating style, from vegan to flexitarian to carnivore, and monitored for an eight-week period. At the end of the evaluation, those that followed an entirely plant-based diet achieved the greatest weight loss. Study leader Gabrielle Turner-McGrievy, Ph.D., notes, "Many researchers agree that vegan eating styles are tied to lower BMI [body mass index], lower prevalence of Type 2 diabetes and less weight gain with age."

Can it really be that simple... eat more plants and lose weight? "Yes," says clean food coach Jeannette Bessinger, of Newport, Rhode Island. "Most people could benefit from eating more vegetables." Co-author of *Natural Solutions for Digestive Health* with Naturopath



Eat food. Not too much.  
Mostly plants.

~Michael Pollan

Jillian Sarno Teta, Bessinger advises her clients to start by eating more green, leafy vegetables.

Vegetables contribute to weight control in several ways, says Bessinger. They fill us up and help calm cravings. Plus, when plants become the bulk of what we eat, we naturally consume fewer high-fat, high-calorie foods.

For an easy appetite-control strategy, Bessinger suggests having a cup of vegetable soup about 10 minutes before a meal. "It shuts off your appetite valve and you'll eat noticeably less," she says, while still feeling full. She also recommends slowing down and being mindful when we eat. Vegetables help us do that. "It takes two-and-a-half minutes to eat a piece of cheesecake, but much more time to eat a big salad," she says.

For New York City-based Victoria Moran, author of *Main Street Vegan* and *The Good Karma Diet*, losing weight and maintaining a healthy lifestyle became easier once she adopted a vegan diet. "I've been through life and loss and ages 40 and 50, and my weight stays steady, some 60 pounds less than it once was," she says. "Every year

when I put away my winter clothes and get out my summer clothes, they fit.”

Her eating strategy is easy, too. “Make your plate look like a Christmas tree,” says Moran, “mostly green with splashes of other bright colors from vegetables and fruits.” She eats green veggies in several ways. She makes her own green juices—one favorite combines celery, kale, apple and lemon juice. She also adds tender greens like romaine or spinach to smoothies that might also contain fruit and citrus juice. She steams greens with plenty of garlic and makes big salads.

“I bought my salad bowl at a restaurant supply house,” Moran exclaims. Salads get an oomph factor with a selection of avocado, pumpkin or hemp seeds, mushrooms, chickpeas or red beans, artichoke hearts, chunks of steamed yam and sautéed tofu or tempeh. Moran cites benefits of more energy to do more physical activity and “feeling really good” as additional outcomes of her dietary shift.

Sophie Uliano, a Los Angeles-based natural beauty expert and author of the new *Gorgeous for Good*, agrees, believing that eating a vegan diet 80 percent of the time can pay dividends in weight loss, well-being, energy and beauty. “Most of the time, eat clean and healthy,” she recommends. “It’s not a diet. It’s a ‘live-it’, a way of life.”

Uliano recently asked two colleagues on the Hallmark Channel’s *Home & Family* show to try eating

Nothing can be delicious when you are holding your breath. For something to be delicious, you have to be present to savor it; and presence is in attention and in the flow of breath. It begins in the mouth, and then it connects our heads to our bodies through our throats and into our lungs and tummies, a beautiful, connective cord of air.

~Anne Lamott

vegan, while also eliminating gluten, alcohol, caffeine and refined grains. The pair lost weight, gained energy and improved their skin tone.

“Transformation comes in a series of small, consistent decisions over time,” concludes Bessinger, eating salad instead of cheeseburgers and vegetables instead of fries. For natural weight management, “Make strategic, long-term changes in stages that you can actually sustain over time.”

*Judith Fertig blogs at [AlfrescoFoodAndLifestyle.blogspot.com](http://AlfrescoFoodAndLifestyle.blogspot.com) from Overland Park, KS.*



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