

## Why go Vegetarian?

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Growing in popularity, following a vegetarian diet has now gone mainstream. Polls show that there are now about eight million Americans following a vegetarian diet. Also growing in popularity are dishes produced by the many new vegetarian food companies and restaurants. In fact, vegetarian is America's trendiest cuisine, attracting the most gifted and creative chefs. Even the finest cooking schools now feature training in vegetarian cuisine.

But there's also a growing awareness of the many profound health advantages of a vegetarian diet. There's a reason that, on average, vegetarians live several years longer than non-vegetarians. As study after study shows, a health-promoting vegetarian diet not only helps prevent a wide range of diseases but also helps those already suffering from disease to get well again.

Health advantages are seen at all ages and for all demographic groups. Vegetarians have a lower risk of heart disease, diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, asthma, constipation, gall stones and certain forms of cancer such as colon and prostate cancer.

We can make a real improvement in the quality of our own lives and those of our families by choosing a vegetarian diet, and we'll be helping heal the environment and save the lives and suffering of animals as we do.

## What to Eat?

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A healthy vegetarian diet is based on vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes (beans, peas, lentils), with small amounts of nuts and seeds, and plenty of water. Add a one-a-day multivitamin for nutritional insurance. See our website for more ideas. *Changes to your diet should only be made after consulting your doctor.*

## How we can help you!

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Whether you're already vegetarian, or just thinking about it, we're here to help. Vegetarians of Washington is an independent, 501(c)3 non-profit organization of people from all walks of life who are interested in a vegetarian diet for a variety of reasons: health, environment, compassion for animals, spiritual, and more.

You don't have to be a vegetarian to join. We encourage people to discover the advantages and experience the pleasures of vegetarian food. We suggest that you proceed at your own pace and do the best you can.

Our **Monthly Dining Event** includes a catered multi-course buffet-style dinner each month. All are welcome to attend. Members of Vegetarians of Washington receive a special discount price.

**Free classes** are offered on the many benefits of a vegetarian diet at various local venues throughout the region. These include practical information on shopping, cooking and nutrition.

Vegetarians of Washington has produced several **helpful books**, including our latest: *In Pursuit of Great Food: A Plant-Based Shopping Guide*.

**Vegfest**, the largest vegetarian food festival in the United States, is held at the Seattle Center in the Spring of each year. It is a celebration of healthy vegetarian food including cooking demonstrations, talks by doctors, a giant vegetarian bookstore, and a huge variety of free food samples to try.

Members receive a free vegan cookbook when they join. Our high-quality e-newsletter covers local news and events.

Learn more at [VegofWA.org](http://VegofWA.org)



## Lower Your Cholesterol the Easy Way

Coronary artery disease and its complications, such as heart attack, are the leading causes of death in the United States. According to the CDC every year about 735,000 Americans have a heart attack. For many their first may be their last so prevention is key.

High blood pressure, high LDL cholesterol (the bad kind), diabetes, obesity and smoking are key risk factors for heart disease.

The culprit behind heart disease is plaque buildup in the coronary arteries, constricting the blood flow to the heart and increasing the risk of a clot blockage. The most common forms of treatment are bypass and stent surgeries, and cholesterol-lowering medications. But there is another option:

**Vegetarians have lower levels of cholesterol and a much lower risk of heart disease.**

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# How can you reduce the risk of a heart attack, and the need for surgery and medication?

## The answer is simple: a healthy vegetarian diet!

### By lowering your cholesterol.

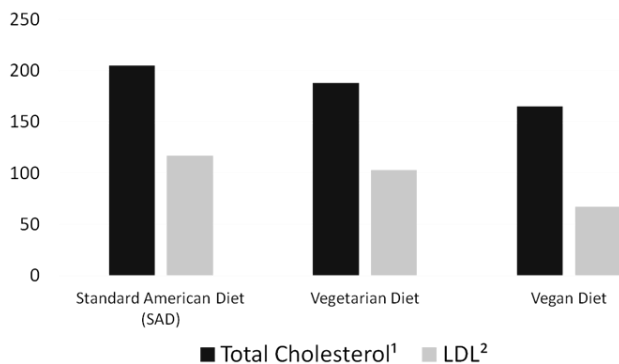
The American Heart Association recommends a cholesterol-level of under 200, although studies show that it needs to be much lower. Ideally, total cholesterol levels should be below 150.

In fact, William P. Castelli, Director of the Framingham Heart Study, said, *“Turning the patient’s course of coronary heart disease around begins to happen only when you get the serum cholesterol down into the 170, 160, 150 areas. This occurs only when the diet goes to the vegetarian type of diet.”*

For 35 years running, not a single person in the Framingham Heart Study whose cholesterol level was below 150 had a heart attack. Think about that for a moment. The closer you can get to the 150 cholesterol goal, the better your chances for heart health.

Vegetarians have much lower total and LDL cholesterol levels in their blood, as you can see in the graph below. Remember, little differences in cholesterol can make a big difference when it comes to heart disease.

Cholesterol Levels as affected by Diet



Animal Fats	Saturated Fat as % of Total Fat
Butter	68%
Beef fat	50%
Chicken fat	30%
Plant Oils	
Safflower Oil	9%
Canola oil	7%

Consuming saturated fat causes cholesterol to be produced by our liver. Avoiding animal products and using limited plant oils dramatically reduces the saturated fat in our diet (see table above).

Cholesterol in the diet comes only from animal products (see table below). It is not needed in the diet at all, since our livers manufacture all we need.

Because they eat much less or no cholesterol, and very little saturated fat, vegetarians and vegans (total vegetarians who eat no eggs or dairy products) have much lower levels of cholesterol in their blood.

Foods (serving size)	Cholesterol (mg)
Egg (1 egg)	274
Shrimp (3oz)	166
Beef, top round (4oz)	103
Chicken breast (4oz)	97
Swiss cheese (3oz)	70
All grains, legumes, nuts	0
All fruits, vegetables	0

One study showed that a healthy vegetarian diet reduced cholesterol just as much as a “statin” drug and the usual American Heart Association diet combined.

### By promoting healthier arteries.

Coronary artery disease, or clogged arteries, is caused by a condition known as atherosclerosis, which happens when a waxy substance, called plaque, forms inside the coronary arteries, narrowing the arteries and thus restricting blood flow to the heart.

Inflammation exacerbates this process. The arteries also become less flexible and less able to expand as pulses of blood pass through them. Vegetarians have less plaque buildup, more flexible arteries and lower levels of inflammation.

### By avoiding the risk factors.

Vegetarians, especially vegans, have a much lower risk of the other risk factors for heart disease (with smoking being a separate issue). For instance vegans have a 78% lower risk of diabetes, a 75% lower risk of high blood pressure and a 65% decreased risk of being overweight or obese.

### What if I already have heart disease?

Good news! A vegetarian diet can effectively treat coronary artery disease as well. Medical studies have shown that low fat vegetarian and vegan diets can halt the progression of plaque buildup in the arteries, and even reopen them a little. Symptoms such as chest pain are also greatly reduced.

At the same time a healthy vegetarian diet also can help treat high cholesterol, diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity that commonly accompany heart disease.