



FOOD AND HEALTH

21 Days To Change A Habit!

In her previous column

DR NANDITA SHAH explained why a vegan diet is healthy and most suitable to our anatomy and why she uses it to reverse diseases. In this issue she tells us more about how she helps people do it

For those of you who have not read the earlier articles, a vegan eats only plant products. No meat, fish or fowl, no milk or eggs nor anything made from any derivative of these.

The first 21 day programme to 'Reverse Diabetes' through a more healthy diet was conducted at Our Native Village, an eco resort just outside Bangalore this summer and the results were fabulous!

Almost all participants were able to substantially reduce their diabetic medications or insulin by the end of the 21 days. Most participants were also off all their blood pressure medications. Weight losses ranged from 7 kg to 2 kg with averages around 4 kg. Some participants with problems such as sleeplessness, joint pains, etc found that these problems had also resolved or reduced. Participants on antidepressants were able to discard these and everyone left in high spirits with a sense that this is do-able, there's plenty of hope to get completely well – something they had been lacking for a long time.

In all we had 21 participants of different ages (from 29 to 80) and both sexes. 19 of them were type II diabetics, 2 were type I diabetics. The logic of the 21 days programme was that these are lifestyle diseases and it takes at least 21 days to change an eating habit. Our taste buds change every 21 days. So if we can keep off something we love for 3 weeks the chances are that it will be easier to break the habit. That is why it is very important to plan before hand, stop completely and not give in even occasionally during these 21 days.

Our conditioning regarding food takes place both in our taste buds and our heads since the time we are born. Getting rid of the conditioning in the head is as hard as breaking the habit for the tongue. Besides the diet, during the 21 days we also questioned our beliefs and the myths about food. Most people reported that after 21 days, they knew that they could stick to it, and that they were not tempted when they went out to parties and social gatherings. Of course the fact that they clearly understood the facts was as helpful as the new taste buds.

Participants were explained how a whole food plant based diet works to reverse diabetes and other illnesses. They were weaned off tea and coffee and put on a whole food vegan diet with buffet type meals. There was no counting calories. The food was good, certainly better than they had expected! And it was plentiful. Besides the regular dal and subzi and rotis, there were plenty of salads. And there was fruit and even whole rice - foods that many had not eaten for a long time.

Above all, there was tremendous support from the group which formed an amazing bond.



Doctor Dean Ornish



Doctor Dean Ornish is a trained cardiac surgeon, specialised in bypass surgery. But instead of using bypass surgery to help his patients with heart disease, he puts them on a low-fat vegetarian diet.

In 1990 Dean Ornish studied 47 patients with significant heart disease. He assigned half of the patients to a control group that received the standard care that doctors usually prescribe, meaning a diet centred on 'lean' meat, poultry, and fish, along with various medications and the usual advice not to smoke. The remaining patients were asked to follow four steps - A low-fat, vegetarian diet, brisk walking for a half-hour per day or an hour three times per week, no smoking, stress management exercises.

Dr. Ornish used no drugs at all, not even cholesterol-lowering drugs. A year later, all the patients had an angiogram. These were compared to their angiograms at the beginning of the study. The results made medical history. The control-group had not generally improved. The blockages in their coronary arteries were worse, on average, than at the beginning of the study. They still had chest pain and still needed medications. That was not news. Despite typical heart treatments, heart disease usually worsens as time goes on.

In the study group, the chest pain began to disappear within weeks.

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Before the programme many participants had been skeptical, others, apprehensive. They were afraid to eat the fruit and rice since

they had always been told it would raise their blood sugars. They thought they could never break their tea drinking habit but found it was easy enough. And even though there were no dairy products, or other animal products they enjoyed their meals. Being told never to count calories or stay hungry was something new!

If someone told you that you could be perfectly healthy, and even reverse diseases by switching to a vegan diet, how would you feel? Be honest! Perhaps you would feel that it's better to die than to miss out on all the pleasures in life. Or maybe, that it is just too difficult to do - it would ruin your social life, be impossible while travelling, and anyway, you'd have no idea what to eat. Either way, it may feel like a severe deprivation, a very desperate measure. It's almost as though you're being asked to leave an addictive habit. You see, food is an addiction.

Despite all the explanations, about why a vegan diet is more suitable for our anatomy, and why eating foods that are unsuitable for our anatomy makes us sick, I found that, in my practice, many patients could not make the switch. But people with serious illnesses, those who were given no hope by their doctors to ever get well, were willing to try anything, even a vegan diet! Their very life was at stake, something much more important than what they ate. My first such patient was a woman who had had heart disease for three years. She consulted me on being discharged after three weeks in Intensive Care. She was holding a prescription a page long, and was desperate to get off all the medications.

I talked to her for an hour, explained to her the diet, and gave her a copy of Reversing Heart Disease by Dr Dean Ornish. I told her to follow the diet and to continue consulting her cardiologist. I told her how the medications could be reduced as she improved. I saw her again after just over two months. She had improved dramatically and was now on just one quarter of a tablet daily. The results astounded me too!

I started using this method with severely ill patients. I found the results quite consistent.

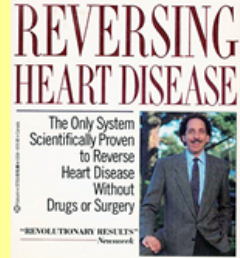
I saw people with heart disease get better. I had people with arterial blocks reopening. People who had diabetes reversed it and some also reversed complications of diabetes. Obese patients lost weight. People consistently said that they did not miss their old diets and never wanted to go back to them. In fact they wanted to share what they had learnt with everyone around them!

Now the challenge for me was to get the message to those who were as yet not so sick but who could prevent severe illnesses in the future or could get off medications and just be well. For this I conducted the Peas vs Pills Workshop. In this seminar I explain to participants the logic behind a whole food plant based diet. A healthy buffet breakfast, lunch and snacks are served with the goal that people understand that the food is tasty, and it's no deprivation. Many enjoyed the meals very much and made the shift. Others were apprehensive about doing it on their own.

Doctor Neal Barnard from the USA was invited to conduct Reversing Diabetes Seminars in Bombay and Bangalore. These were similar to the Peas vs Pills in content, but they were totally focused on diabetes. We continue to conduct these seminars as well now. Many people have made the shift, and got amazing results.



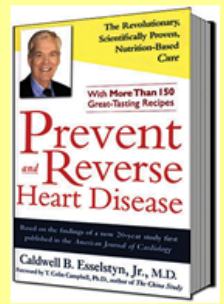
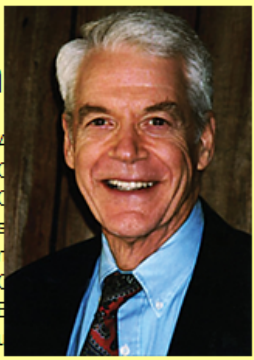
How



Cholesterol levels dropped dramatically. Coronary arteries, which had been closing off, were actually starting to reopen. Angiograms showed clear evidence of reopening in 80% of patients in the first year. These results were

published in The Lancet in 1990. The programme cost much less than surgery, was easy to follow, and could help keep patients healthy over the long term. The side effects? - the average patient lost 22 pounds in the first year!

Caldwell Esselstyn



vegan diet for severely ill heart patients. Some of the patients had been told they had less than a year to live. But of the 17 patients who stuck to the programme, there was not a single cardiac event over the next 12 years! They were alive and well and had reversed their disease.

NB

Dr Neal D. Barnard MD is an adjunct associate professor of medicine at the George Washington University School of Medicine in Washington, DC, and president of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. His breakthrough research established a new and powerful approach to diabetes, based on adjustments to the type of foods we eat. His book, Dr. Neal Barnard's Program for Reversing Diabetes, has allowed many people to enjoy the same benefits his research participants have enjoyed for years.

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DR. NEAL BARNARD'S PROGRAM for REVERSING DIABETES

THE SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN SYSTEM FOR REVERSING DIABETES WITHOUT DRUGS

NEAL D. BARNARD, MD

Dr. Neal Barnard is an adjunct associate professor of medicine at the George Washington University School of Medicine in Washington, DC, and president of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. His breakthrough research established a new and powerful approach to diabetes, based on adjustments to the type of foods we eat. His book, Dr. Neal Barnard's Program for Reversing Diabetes, has allowed many people to enjoy the same benefits his research participants have enjoyed for years.



do you begin? Here is a step by step guide.

Step 1. Learning and Preparation – To get started you prepare. Doing anything new requires some learning. Get yourself some recipes which use whole plant based foods and practice making dishes you will like with the new foods you are going to eat. Read up on healthy vegan cooking. You can find more help on our website www.sharan-india.org

Step 2. Where to shop – Go to the health food store and try new foods. Learn how to make wonderful salads and where to buy all the ingredients.

Step 3. What to eat – Make a list of all the dishes you could have for breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks so that you are never left wondering what you will eat. Remember, a plant-based diet does not sit heavy in your stomach for hours like a glass of milk or a steak does. You'll feel light and energetic but in the beginning when this feeling is new, you will feel hungry. The good news is that you can eat as much as you want! No counting calories as long as its whole foods that you are eating. So fill the fridge and kitchen cabinets with lots of arsenal for your new diet.

Step 4. Trial run – Go in for a 3-week trial run to see how you feel and where the mistakes lie.

Step 5. Get support. Do it with a friend or a family member. Use each other to dissuade you from falling off the wagon. Also it's more fun to do something new together. Pledge to keep each other company for the 21 day programme.

Step 6. Get the tests done – If you are suffering from any diseases like diabetes and hypertension you may want to get your lab values and a physical evaluation by a doctor before and after. We also suggest getting serum vitamin B12 and vitamin D levels done regularly.

Step 7. Cleansing – Once you are ready you can get militant. Throw out everything that does not fit in to your new regime out of the house. Get rid of all the animal products – cheese, butter, paneer, curds, milk, eggs, meat, fish and fowl and all the things that contain any of these ingredients. Get rid of the refined products – anything, which is not whole – sugar, oil, polished rice, white flour, juices etc. Once you have done this cleansing you can begin to think clearly. Cleansing is important, as it is symbolic as well as practical.

Step 8. Shopping - Buy plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. These will be the new staple. Buy some whole grains and nuts and seeds. And begin!

Step 9. Remember to be consistent. No exceptions. Plan for 21 days, and not more. It is not a whole lifetime you are pledging for, it's just 3 weeks and you can do it. It takes at least 21 days to change a habit so it is really important that you stick it out. Once you have reached your goal you can decide if you would like to do it longer. If you need more inspiration, join one of our workshops – residential or non-residential. For more information write to nandita@sharan-india.org.

Although you will get results in the 21 days, you need to be consistent to keep the results. You cannot solve a problem by going back to the same lifestyle that caused it in the first place! But having made the change for 21 days can give you results that will inspire you to stick to it. It's surprisingly easier than it sounds. Remember this is just a diet change, which cannot harm in any way. Individual responses can vary so it's best to reduce medications with the help of a doctor. For more information consult with one of our doctors, who have used this method on themselves and many other patients and have seen the benefits first hand.

On your marks, get set, go!

Good



Luck!