Position Statement On

Wholefood Plant Based Diets

The Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP) recommends adopting a wholefood plant-based eating pattern for optimal health. This position statement discusses the reasons for this recommendation.

Key messages

- *Plant-based dietary patterns have been associated with many health benefits*
- *Participants with the greatest need of clinical improvement are advised to make the change*
- *CHIP educates participants about the relationship between diet and lifestyle*

Wholefood Plant Based Diets

Plant-based dietary patterns, including Mediterranean type diets, have been associated with many health benefits, including increased longevity (1,2), sustained weight loss (3,4), reduced blood cholesterol (3-5), reductions in blood pressure, and the prevention and reversal of chronic diseases (*see Position Statement on Disease Reversal*). Evidence also points towards the benefits of plant-based diets in the treatment of acid reflux (6), constipation (7), haemorrhoids (8), diverticulosis (7), asthma (9) and kidney disease (10).

Diets high in animal foods tend to be associated with higher rates of non-communicable diseases [NCDs] (11). NCDs include cardiovascular diseases [CVDs] and diabetes and account for 63% of deaths worldwide (11). Dietary guidelines now reflect these findings with recommendations for increased consumption of fruits and vegetables (19,20), legumes, nuts (21) and wholegrain products (22, 23).

Plant foods contain many protective factors such as antioxidants and fiber, and are also low in nutrients associated with an increased risk of disease, such as saturated and trans fats. Conversely, animal foods such as meat and diary tend to contain higher amounts of saturated fat and cholesterol, and they contain no dietary fiber. Consumption of red and processed meats, in particular, have been associated with an increased risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, gestational diabetes, CVD, and some types of cancer (1). The World Cancer Research Fund considers the evidence convincing for the causal link between high intake of red meat and colorectal cancer (12).

Research has shown that there are increased benefits with increased conformity to eating an exclusively wholefood plant-based diet (13,14). Furthermore, wholefood plant-based diets that avoid all animal foods and that are naturally low in fat have been shown to arrest disease and in some cases contribute to its regression (15-18).

CHIP advises that participants with the greatest need of clinical improvement make as big a move towards whole plant-based foods as possible for the greatest clinical results in disease reversal (1, 11, 13, 14).

CHIP offers some optimal dietary reference points and goals, and allows people to choose their own level of implementation, which is usually based on their level of motivation, state of health, health goals and readiness to take action. CHIP strives to help people move along an eating and lifestyle continuum towards lower risk and better health outcomes using local foods and resources. The Eat More cookbook contains exclusively plant-based recipes to equip both those individuals who choose to adopt a completely plant-based eating pattern, and those who would like to incorporate more plant-based meals into their diets.

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