

A red and white sticky note with a red border and a white center. The word "HELLO" is written in white capital letters on the red border. The phrase "I'm Vegan" is written in black cursive script on the white center. The note is slightly curled at the bottom right corner.

HELLO

I'm Vegan

Why Being Vegan Is a Bad Idea

We were recently treated to the news that [a 34-year-old woman, an Australian university professor, died on Mt. Everest](#) while on a mission to prove that “vegans can do anything”.

Apparently they can't.

To be fair, plenty of non-vegans have also died on Mt. Everest. But being vegan while climbing seems like tempting fate, the equivalent of fighting Mike Tyson with one hand tied behind your back.

Veganism is a really bad idea.

By depriving themselves of an entire class of food, namely meat and anything that comes from an animal like eggs and dairy products, vegans deliberately make themselves weak and reliant on substandard sources of necessary nutrients.

Veganism is not slimming

My perception is that many people become vegans because they perceive that vegans are more slender than the general population – a feat that isn't hard

to manage.

Somehow they got the mistaken idea that meat caused the obesity epidemic. Which is strange, because humans have been eating meat for literally a couple of million years, and obesity was relatively uncommon until a few decades ago.

Vegan eating conjures images of platefuls of healthy steaming vegetables, maybe followed by some berries for dessert.

The reality is quite different.

The following foods are vegan:

- peanut butter and jelly sandwiches
- pasta
- donuts
- soda pop and energy drinks
- candy
- sugary breakfast cereal

These foods can make you fat in a hurry, or prevent fat loss. There's nothing about being vegan that conduces to weight loss.

In fact, most vegans I've known have eaten exactly these kinds of fattening foods. They are being completely misled about what causes weight loss.

In contrast, [a low-carbohydrate diet, heavy in animal products, leads to fat loss](#). Add weightlifting and the loss is pure fat.

Protein

While lots of misinformation about protein requirements floats around, most of it is either broscience, erroneous folk wisdom, or bad advice from the FDA.

[The US RDA for protein is 0.8 g per kg bodyweight](#). That's too low. Some bodybuilders (bros) recommend 2.2 g or more per kg, and that's too high.

Most vegans appear to believe that you need even less than the US RDA. Furthermore, protein quality matters, as the body makes use of less of the protein consumed if the quality is low.

Plant protein is generally of low quality, i.e. of low biological value, to use the technical term.

The highest quality sources of protein are whey (made from milk), and eggs. Meat is not far behind. Plant sources like soy or legumes are low in biological value.

By consuming low amounts of low-quality protein, vegans set themselves up for sarcopenia (muscle wasting), osteoporosis, and probably senile dementia. (The latter being aggravated by vegans' non-existent consumption of vitamin B12.)

[Chronic fatigue](#) is also associated with low protein intake, since not enough protein predisposes to oxidative stress from low levels of internal antioxidants, mainly glutathione, which is made from protein.

On the plus side, [it's possible that low protein intake will make you live longer](#). But you may have muscle wasting, brittle bones, and dementia, so it won't be a lovely old age.

Omega-3 fatty acids

Omega-3 fatty acids are those that are found in abundance in fish oil, an animal product.

The omega-3 index is a measure of the amount of omega-3 fats found in red blood cells, and [it is strongly correlated with good health](#). This is an example of another healthy nutrient that vegans deprive themselves of.

The body can convert some forms of omega-3, for instance those found in walnuts and the like, into the longer chain omega-3 fats that are critical constituents of cell membranes. But this conversion is low and inefficient, and counting on it to produce the right amount and kind of omega-3 is foolish.

[The ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fats is very important for health also](#). Our paleolithic ancestors are thought to have had a ratio of about 1.0, whereas in the modern world, many people have ratios of 20 to 50.

The chief culprit behind the increased omega-6/3 ratio is vegetable oils, which have no omega-3 and an abundance of omega-6. (Olive oil is an exception; it's healthy, and not really a vegetable oil anyway.)

Vegetable oils are vegan. So here's another example of vegans depriving themselves of healthy nutrients and in most cases adding bad ones.

Not. Good. For. Health.

Vitamin B12 and Iron

Vitamin B12 is a required nutrient, and is found only in animal products. It's absence produces pernicious anemia (that's a medical term, not my adjective for how bad it is) and nervous system damage. It can also lead to high levels of homocysteine, which is a risk factor for heart disease and dementia.

While a simple supplement can fix this problem, [most vegans appear not to take them](#).

Given all that I've written about the ill effects of too much [iron](#) lately, one might think that vegans have an advantage in this area. Well, yes and no.

Iron is a required nutrient, low levels of which cause anemia, and vegans are known to have a higher rate of anemia. (See previous link.) So, many vegans

appear to have trouble getting enough iron; meat is the biggest source of iron, so it's no wonder.

On the other hand, [vegetarians were found to have both lower iron than meat eaters, and better insulin sensitivity](#). Phlebotomy of the meat eaters lowered their iron and improved insulin sensitivity. Chalk one up for the vegetarians, as insulin sensitivity is a key measure of health.

But, you see what I did there? *Vegetarians*, not vegans. These were so-called lacto-ovo vegetarians, who don't eat meat but do consume dairy products and eggs. It's not necessary and indeed harmful to forego all animal products, although as we see there's some benefit to foregoing meat – although this can be a detriment in other ways.

I believe a properly constructed lacto-ovo vegetarian diet can be healthy and provide close to optimal nutrition. I don't believe that a vegan diet does the same.

Choline

Choline is an essential nutrient in humans, and was only recognized as such in 1998.⁽¹⁾ It's necessary for such functions as neurotransmitter synthesis through acetylcholine, cell signaling via phospholipids, lipid transport via lipoproteins, and methylation, for example in homocysteine. Choline is important in fetal development.

Inadequate intake of choline can lead to fatty liver and neural tube defects. During pregnancy and lactation, higher amounts of choline are required.

Inadequate choline intake is associated with heart disease in older men, and supplementing with choline relieves the homocysteine excess seen in them.

It is thought that *the vast majority of Americans* have an inadequate intake of choline.

Eggs are the most concentrated source of choline, followed by liver and wheat germ.

While choline is found in some non-animal products, such as wheat germ, the fact that most Americans don't get enough choline even when they eat animal products suggests that vegans are at especially high risk of choline deficiency, which can have major health consequences for them and their children.

Human Evolution and Animals

Humans have evolved to eat meat, and in fact eating meat may be one of the biggest factors that turned us from our former primate selves into humans.

Depriving ourselves of all meat and animal products makes optimal health and nutrition very difficult, perhaps impossible.

Many vegans became so because they don't like what eating meat and other animal products does for non-human animals. I'm in complete sympathy – I used to be a vegan, and for that reason mainly.

Unfortunately, the reality of humans on this earth is that meat and animal products are necessary for our health. There are no vegan societies; presumably any that may have existed have disappeared, wiped out due to disease, or absorbed by more powerful conquerors whose meat eating didn't crimp their health or reproduction.

That fact doesn't condone animal cruelty or make their lives a plaything, but it does put some perspective on morality. If it's necessary to eat meat, then it doesn't seem that it can be wrong.

Update: Brittle Bones from Veganism

Here's an update to this article. Hopefully I will find more items to add to the topic of why being vegan is a bad idea.

Noted vegan physician and lifelong advocate of veganism [Dr. John McDougall fell from a standing height in his bathroom and broke several major bones](#), including several vertebrae (in his back), his pelvis, and femur.

Maybe I'm wrong in singling out this incident, since it doesn't count much as science, but it is a case study in veganism. And maybe I'm being unfair to Dr. McDougall; however, he was the one who freely brought it up, and he's also one that brings up incidents like this when it suits his own prejudices.

It's not normal for a 67-year-old man to break a bunch of bones when falling from a standing height, and in my opinion that is due to his lifelong veganism. A lack of animal protein likely weakened his bones to the point that he developed osteoporosis. Or it could be [a lack of vitamin K](#) from grass-fed dairy products caused the osteoporosis.

By the way, Dr. McDougall also boasts that his cholesterol level is 150, but [low cholesterol is associated with increased mortality](#).

PS: [Check out my Supplements Buying Guide for Men](#), as well as [my books](#).