

Vegetarian diet offers healthier alternatives

BY BRIANNA KISER
For the Index

She walks to the Ryle cafeteria faint with hunger. While others stroll straight to the pizza, cheeseburgers and chicken tenders, she heads to the salad bar to fill up on tomatoes, carrots and pasta salad. This produce connoisseur is an example of the cafeteria vegetarian.

Not all vegetarians exist mainly on lettuce and bean sprouts.

"People are always just like, 'Why? What do you eat?'" junior Rachel Hanks said. "I'll tell them, 'Well you know, there's pasta and a bunch of other options besides meat.'"

Hanks said she became a vegetarian because she was interested in a healthier lifestyle.

"Mainly I did it for health reasons," Hanks said. "I'd been wanting to become a vegetarian for a long time, so when I finally got my own kitchen I thought it would be a perfect time to start."

Jeannie McStay, outreach coordinator of the Vegetarian Resource Group in Baltimore, Md., said vegetarian diets offer a number of nutritional benefits, such as lower levels of saturated fat and cholesterol. She said the American vegetarian tends to have a lower body mass index and fewer incidences of heart disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and dementias such as Al-

zheimer's disease.

"Improved health will not be seen if a vegetarian is existing solely on potato chips and soda pop," McStay said. "To see those healthful results, a person should be eating foods with low sugar and little fat as well."

McStay said there has been a steady rise in the popularity of vegetarian lifestyles.

"In 1994 there was about 1 percent of the adult population that never ate meat, but in 2000 it went up to 2.5 percent, so that's a pretty big jump," McStay said.

McStay said there are many different types of vegetarians. The most common type are lacto-ovo-vegetarians. Like Hanks, they do not eat any meat, poultry or fish, but they do eat eggs and dairy products. Vegetarians who will eat fish are called pesca-vegetarians. Fruitarians consume a diet of fruits, grains and nuts. Vegetarians who allow occasional exceptions to their diets even have a name. They are called flexitarians. The strictest form of vegetarianism is veganism.

"Vegans do not eat meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy or even honey because it is made [by] bees," McStay said. "They also will not wear any clothing made from animals because it's more of an ethical concern than anything for them."

The most common misconception is that vegetarians do not get enough protein. Jerry Mayhew, professor in the Health and Exercise Science depart-

ment, said protein is extremely important to the human body's development and can be found in other food sources than meat.

"People will usually say, 'protein equals meat,' but you can certainly get it from other places such as nuts and certain vegetables," Mayhew said.

Weight loss sometimes can be a motivation for those thinking of becoming vegetarians. However, McStay and Mayhew warn that this is not a good motivation.

"The weight fixation is not the central issue, and that shouldn't be your main goal," Mayhew said. "There is some information out of Dallas, from the famous Cooper's Clinic down there that does so much research, and they've proved that you can be a heavy person and still be fit. So it's the health aspect, not the weight aspect, that should be your motivation."

McStay said it is important to always include exercise during your week, because a vegan diet alone will not lead to weight loss.

However popular the health benefits of veganism are, the strictest vegans are typically ethically against the slaughter of animals.

"It's something you can do," McStay said. "You can help prevent cruelty by not eating meat. You can't prevent troops going out to Iraq or our poor economy, but this is something that you can do."



Erin Lee Givarr/Index

Senior Chelsea Brown shops for produce at Hy-Vee. She avoids meat packaged in factory farms and, instead, looks for meat from local livestock.

Spring brings allergy season, reason to take precautions

The onset of spring is also the onset of allergies for more than 50 million Americans. Allergies occur when the body overreacts to things that do not cause problems for most people, like pollen, mold, pet dander and dust.

Allergies, the sixth-leading cause of chronic disease in the United States, cost the health care system an estimated \$18 billion each year, and the incidence of allergies continues to increase.

Symptoms of allergies include:

- Runny nose
- Watery eyes
- Itchy nose, eyes and roof of mouth
- Sneezing

- Stuffy nose
- Pressure in the nose and cheeks
- Ear fullness and popping
- Dark circles under the eyes
- Hives
- Respiratory symptoms also might occur, and asthma is much more common in allergic people. Symptoms include cough, shortness of breath and tight chest.

To help minimize the effects of airborne allergens, precautions can be taken. For instance, people should pay attention to the pollen counts. This will help develop an understanding of particular allergy patterns. Outdoor activities also should

be limited in the morning, when pollen counts are highest. Clothing and linens should not be dried outside because they can collect pollen.

Those who have mold allergies can reduce mold in the home by removing houseplants and frequently cleaning shower curtains, bathroom windows, damp walls, areas with dry rot and indoor trash cans. Indoor humidity also can be reduced through the use of air conditioners, dehumidifiers, ventilation and exhaust fans. Doors should be kept open between rooms to increase circulation.

It is not known for certain why some substances trigger

an allergic reaction in some people, but allergies are usually genetic. In fact, if one parent has allergies, the likelihood that his or her child will have allergies is 48 percent. If both parents suffer from allergies, the risk increases to 70 percent.

However, it is difficult for someone to determine what the specific allergies are. Skin testing is done to identify allergens. It is a painless test used to predict what your symptoms might be and to tailor medicines and other treatments such as allergy shots.

A variety of medicines can relieve allergy symptoms. Antihistamines will help reduce

sneezing, runny noses and the itchiness associated with allergies. These medicines tend to be most useful when taken prior to being exposed to allergens, and some can cause drowsiness and dry mouth.

Decongestants can help relieve the stuffy nose associated with allergies. Typically decongestants come as pills, nasal sprays and nose drops and are best when used for a short period of time. Often nasal sprays and drops can cause users to feel more congested when they discontinue use.


Eye drops are another popular medicine used to relieve allergy symptoms of itchy, watery

eyes. These are prescribed when other medicines are not providing relief.

People can receive allergy shots to increase tolerance to allergens. These often are effective for people who are allergic to pollen, stinging insects, cats and dust mites.

Through lifestyle changes, listening to advice from physicians and taking proper medications, you can effectively overcome allergies.

If you have questions or concerns about allergies, please talk with your physician or contact Dr. Ciesemier at Kirksville Allergy and Asthma at 660-627-2553.



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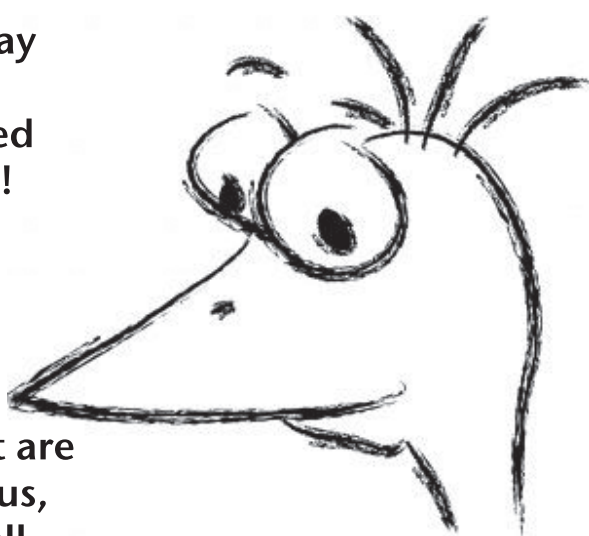
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