

## Week 1

### **What is veganism?**

The vegan diet is more of a lifestyle than it is a diet. It is a lifestyle that abstains from using animal products and bi-products.

The vegan diet excludes:

- Meat (including poultry)
- Fish/ seafood
- Dairy
- Eggs
- Honey

The lifestyle is based on compassion towards all animals and excludes personal care products that contain animal bi-products or cause harm towards animals in anyway. This means all beauty products, personal products and clothing must not be comprised of any animal materials or inflict harm or injustice on animals in the making of the product. Vegans choose foods that are only plant-based or plant derived and choose clothing from natural plant fibers or synthetic materials that have no animal bi-products.

Vegans do not wear:

- Leather
- Fur
- Wool
- Silk

Many vegans have different reasons or different beliefs as to why the vegan lifestyle is the one they choose.

Reasons why people choose veganism:

- Animal rights
- Environment & Political
- Spiritual
- Moral
- Health

### **Why is this a compassionate lifestyle?**

Animals do not have a voice and have virtually no rights. They are exploited for our own benefit and they are at the control of humans for our food and goods industry. The vegan lifestyle serves

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as a voice for animals as well as the planet. The lifestyle pays respect to animals and acknowledges that they sentient and intelligent creatures that we co-inhabit the earth with. Vegans believe that humans should not rule animals for our own gain but that animals have a valuable place on the earth. This lifestyle is compassionate in that it spares innocent lives and does not partake in exploitation of voiceless sentient beings. As you become vegan you will find a closer bond to animals and a better understanding of our similarities. Being vegan shifts your perception and allows you to become more conscious of all life and living creatures.

### **What are the benefits?**

There are thousands of benefits to being vegan!

Spiritual benefits:

- More consciousness
- No consumption of fear
- Closer bond to all living creatures
- Greater love and compassion
- Better understanding of religious and spiritual texts and teachings
- Higher vibration

Environmental benefits:

- Decreased climate changes
- Decreased rainforest destruction
- Decrease pollution
- Saves water
- Decreased greenhouse gas emissions
- Decreased carbon emissions
- More land mass for harvesting foods to feed the world's population

Health benefits:

- Decreased risk of cancer
- Decreased risk of cardiovascular disease
- Better bowel movements
- Increased energy and libido
- Decreased risk of Type 2 Diabetes
- Lower body mass index
- Healthier skin
- Lower cholesterol
- Higher intake of phytonutrients

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- Less exposure to antibiotics and exogenous hormones

Social benefits:

- Part of a small tight-knit community
- Vegan and animal rights volunteer opportunities
- Easy networking with like-minded people

### **What Can I Eat?**

Anything that is not derived or comes from an animal.

Vegan foods:

- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Legumes and beans
- Grains
- Nuts and seeds

Protein options:

- Lentils and beans
- Nuts and seeds
- Soy-tofu, edamame, tempeh
- Wheat gluten- seitan
- Powders-hemp, soy, pea, brown rice

Dining out

- Mr. Natural (veg)
- Bouldin Creek Café (veg)
- Casa De Luz (vegan)
- Counter Coulter (vegan)
- Mother's Cafe and Garden (veg)
- Fat Cats Coffee
- Veggie heaven (veg)
- Swad (veg)
- Maoz Vegetarian
- Madras Pavilion (veg)
- Sweet Ritual (vegan desserts)

Food Trucks

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- Arlo's (vegan)
- Vegan Yacht
- Vegan Nom
- Cool beans (vegan)
- Unity Kitchen (vegan)
- BBQ Revolution (vegan)
- Bistro Vonish (vegan)
- Conscious Cravings (vegan)
- Schmaltz's (veg)

\* See Happy Cow for more listings

### **How Do I Eat While Traveling or On the Go?**

- Make plans ahead of time
- Look for the most veg friendly areas
- Call and ask questions
- Always bring your own food!  
Ex: trail mix, fruit, dried foods, canned goods, etc
- Learn how to ask for vegetarian/ vegan food in other languages
- Look for traditional veg dishes in other cultures/countries
- Stock up at food markets

### **How Do I Begin?**

First Steps to becoming vegan

1. Fill your fridge and pantry with vegan foods. Look to buy organic when possible. Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. Shop at all natural food stores for the most vegan options.

Tips: Look for the vegan certification logo, check ingredients that you are not sure about, bring vegan recipes you want to try out. Ask a veg friend to help you shop!

2. Research recipes online and find vegan blogs, books, and social media networks. Use google and vegan ingredient list sites to double check (<http://www.veganpeace.com/ingredients/ingredients.htm>).
3. Make some vegan friends! Facebook: Austin Vegans and Friends and Austin Vegans
4. Inform your friends and family about your new vegan lifestyle ☺ Ask for understanding and support.
5. Enjoy the process of changing your diet and lifestyle and embrace the benefits!

Homework: Prepare your body for the change and let go of processed food, synthetic drinks, microwaving food, fast food, fried food and harmful chemicals and GMOs. Add: More fresh

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fruits and vegetables, nut butters, herbs, beans and legumes! Switch from sodas and sweetened beverages to herbal teas ☺

## FAQ?

- Why not honey?

“Keeping bees for commercial or hobby purposes violates the bees' rights to be free of human exploitation. As with companion animals or other farmed animals, breeding, buying and selling animals violates the animals' rights to live free of human use and exploitation, and bees are commercially bred, bought and sold.

In addition to keeping bees, taking their honey is also exploitative.

While beekeepers will say that they leave plenty of honey for the bees, the honey belongs to the bees.

Furthermore, some bees are killed every time the beekeeper smokes the bees out of their hive and takes their honey. These deaths are an additional reason to boycott honey; even if no bees were killed during honey collection, the exploitation of the bees would be reason enough.”

Source: <http://animalrights.about.com/od/Veganism/a/Vegans-And-Honey.htm>

- Why not wool or silk?

Wool- Mulesing is removing strips of wool-bearing skin around the buttocks of the sheep. They do this to reduce flystrike which is a condition in which fly eggs hatch on a host animal resulting in maggots that eat the animal. This happens to the buttocks on sheep because the feces and urine attracts flies. They perform this procedure without anesthesia.

They also selectively breed to produce sheep with more wrinkly skin which results in more wool. More skin and wool can create more problems for the sheep.

Source: <http://animalrights.about.com/od/companionanimalspets/g/Flystrike.htm>

Silk- Silkworms spin silk to make a cocoon for their pupal stage. The cocoons are placed in boiling water to kill the worm and begin the unraveling stage to produce silk thread. If they waited for the silkworm to mature into the moth, they would chew out of the cocoon to escape and in turn there would be a shorter and less value cocoon. 15 silkworms are killed for a gram of silk thread.

Source: <http://animalrights.about.com/od/animalsusedinclthing/a/Why-Vegans-Do-Not-Wear-Silk.htm>

- Why not vegetarian?  
Vegetarianism does not directly address animal right issues because it includes a diet that still exploits animals that produce dairy and eggs. It also does not decrease carbon foot printing as much as the vegan diet. The biggest impact one can make is to adopt a vegan lifestyle and completely abstain from animal products and bi-products.
- Can I get enough protein?  
Absolutely! The idea of how much protein we need is completely skewed in The United States. Excess animal protein can be harmful and lead to health complications. It is very easy to get enough protein for men, women and children on a vegan diet. It is important to eat a well-rounded diet and include foods such as hemp and spirulina into your routine.
- Will I become deficient?  
It is possible to become deficient on the vegan diet but that being said anyone on an omnivore diet can become deficient. As a physician I often see people of all dietary backgrounds deficient in several vitamins, minerals and nutrients. We will talk more about how to supplement if needed.
- Is soy bad?  
Soy has got a bad rap in recent years. Soy should not be criminalized and should be credited for several of its health properties. It is important to consume only organic/ non-GMO soy. It is also important to not over eat soy in the diet and utilize alternatives that are soy-free. If soy is a concern of yours choose other milks such as almond or coconut. There are several soy-free vegan options.