

Laney Dwyer
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Vegetarian Position Paper Reflection

There has been a dramatic increase in vegetarian diets in recent years amongst ages 18-44 years old. Plant based diets are noticeably more sustainable than carnivorous diets due to the decrease in natural resources used in food production and consumption. There are six types of vegetarian diets listed on *The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: Vegetarian Diets* position paper which include vegan, lacto-ovo-vegetarian, lacto-vegetarian, ovo-vegetarian, raw vegan, and of course vegetarian. I have considered the vegan diet once before, but only for a short period of time in order to attempt to alleviate my gastrointestinal sensitivities I was facing at the time. I found that sticking to a complete vegan diet consisting of all plant based food did decrease any pain and discomfort I was experiencing. It also helped me to discover my lactose intolerance I was unaware that I had. These diets do pose a risk for deficiencies but can readily be avoided by ensuring these eight nutrients; protein, n-3 fatty acids, iron, zinc, iodine, calcium, vitamin D, and vitamin B-12. All of these nutrients are extremely important to maintaining a healthy function of the body and to ensure the body is equipped to prevent and treat diseases and illnesses. An important takeaway from this paper that I found intriguing was the use of plant based diets to treat and prevent obesity and diabetes. I was unaware that these diets are associated with a lower body mass index considered by the Adventist Health Study-2 and the EPIC-Oxford Study. A low body mass index is key to maintaining a strong cardiovascular system which is vital for the prevention of cardiovascular diseases such as heart disease, hypertension, and hyperlipidemia. Overall, it has been found in many studies that those who partake in omnivorous diets increase intake of fiber and decrease the amount of saturated fats as well as generally a healthy cholesterol level. In summary, the increase in vegetarian diets shine light on sustainable access to prevention and treatment of diseases.