



Dear Dr. Hoo,

Can you provide some information on the benefits of a vegan diet?

The vegan diet is a subset of the vegetarian diet whereby any animal byproducts are avoided completely. Strict vegans extend this ideology to a philosophy and lifestyle which excludes the use of animals for food, clothing, or any other purpose.

Recently, investigators from Karolinska University Hospital in Stockholm found that a gluten free vegan diet was beneficial for not only the joints of patients with rheumatoid arthritis, but also their hearts. The study reflected other research which indicate that healthy nutrition plays an important role for those with rheumatoid arthritis; these individuals are often known to be more prone to heart attacks, strokes and clogged arteries.

In this study, 38 volunteers were placed on a gluten-free vegan food diet while 28 subjects were asked to eat a balanced but non-vegan diet for one year. Those on the gluten-free vegan diet excluded animal products and gluten found in wheat, rye and barley. After one year, this group had lower levels of low-density lipoprotein, or LDL, the so-called "bad cholesterol" which can lead to clogged arteries. They also lost weight while the volunteers on the other diet showed no change.

The study, published in *Arthritis Research & Therapy*, found the diet reduced symptoms of chronic inflammation in those with rheumatoid arthritis. The diet also protected against heart attacks and stroke by lowering cholesterol levels and lowering body weight, all of which reduce overall inflammatory chemicals in the body which increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.

If you or someone you know would like more information about treatment options for rheumatoid arthritis, cardiovascular disease or other inflammatory conditions, please call us for more details.

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