Doctor's Diary: I gave up milk and dairy products and am now healthier than ever!

[Dr Nandita Shah](#) Sep 25, 2015 at 06:59 pm

I became a doctor to reduce suffering and during my practice in the mid 80s I found out that in order for us to consume milk, cows are repeatedly artificially impregnated. They use a 'rape rack' to restrain the animal for this procedure and it is similar to rape. I also found out that the moment a cow delivers her calf, it is taken away from her so that humans can have the milk that rightfully belongs to the calf. I did not want to be a part of this anymore and so on ethical grounds I decided to turn vegan. Up until that moment I was a vegetarian and had no problem with drinking milk.

I started reading medical journals and nowhere could I find the connection between milk and good health. This made me realise that in nature, no animal drinks another animal's milk. The very first article that I read while researching explained that the countries with the highest incidence of osteoporosis were those with the highest per capita intake of dairy. As I had travelled around the world on my work as a homeopath, I saw the truth in this. Before the 1950s, dairy played a small part in our Indian diets and till the early 1980s cheese wasn't easily available in India. Osteoporosis in India was less common at that time. In the West, where allergies were a big problem at the time, the connection to the higher intake of animal proteins could be made. Though I left dairy for an ethical reason, I started noticing that my health improved as well. Also read – [10 reasons that will convince you to go vegan.](#)

Spreading the word

Soon I started telling my patients about it. Many didn't want to change. We are creatures of habit. I found that when their disease was termed incurable by doctors, then they would be willing to try everything. One of my first patients was a 65 -year-old man who had been a diabetic for 30 years and was losing his eyesight as a complication of diabetes. He also suffered from severe bipolar disorder. A foodie, his blood sugar couldn't be controlled with the usual medications. I suggested that he give up dairy, and for lack of an alternative, he did. In just two weeks his blood sugar levels normalised. Within a few months, he was off medication too. But the most amazing thing was that his bipolar disorder reversed after stopping the

medications. This was a very important learning – much of the diseases we see today are a result of medications.

Another early case, a 70-year-old kindergarten teacher who had heart disease for three years. She had just been in the ICU for three weeks and had a page-long prescription. By switching to a whole plant based diet, she was able to stop all those medications, regain her energy and even go back to a daily physical workout in just three months. After several of these amazing recoveries, I felt the need to spread this information to a large number of people. This is when I conducted a workshop called 'Peas VS Pills' under the banner of my newly formed organisation, SHARAN.

In this and all our seminars, we serve three healthy whole plant based buffet meals so that people can learn experientially what they should eat as well and observe how it feels in the body. This makes an impact as people realise that it is similar to the food that they eat and love, maybe even tastier. They also feel the difference in their body in just one day! I always say that the food should be both delicious as well as satisfying. Only then could this be sustainable. Most of us are foodies. Cooking techniques are also always taught in the seminar, usually through videos if a physical demonstration is not possible. Also read – How going vegan helped this 40-yr-old lose 17 kg.

All in the mind

We are conditioned to think that we need milk and meat but once you change this mindset, you won't crave it anymore. If you ask me how difficult it is to stay vegan when I was travelling all over the world, I'd say it is not difficult at all. It's a mindset. Just as a vegetarian will find vegetarian meals anywhere without thinking it is difficult, a vegan would find it easy to find vegan meals.

Wherever I go for my talks or events, I make sure the food served is vegan. There have been instances where I had to meet with the chef to give him ideas on vegan menus and I am happy to oblige but giving a talk on veganism with non-vegan food around is something I never do. Generally people are sceptical about vegan food and do not want to give up old habits. When they taste it their mindset changes.

Though I don't cherish eating out, whenever I do, I make sure I explain to the chef what my needs are. Our traditional Indian food – *daal, chawal, roti, subji* is largely vegan. Milk, curds, buttermilk and even cheese can easily be substituted by plant-based alternatives that are easy to make. Meat, eggs and non-veg alternatives are not too difficult either and our bodies respond with a resounding 'yes'. Once you make the decision, you will find ways to stick to it.

My meal diaries

I always shop and cook for myself whenever possible as a commitment to my own health and body. I also eat only whole, plant-based, organic food as it is high in nutrition and you don't need large portions to stay full. My morning starts with two glasses of smoothie made using greens from my garden and fresh fruits. Lunch is usually a big plate of salad and a cooked veggie with rice or *roti*. At times, I have a sandwich, stir-fried veggies, khichdi, etc. Dinner is usually the same. Just with these three meals my body feels nourished and satiated. I don't feel the need to eat more. Here's a vegan diet plan for weight loss.

Our body craves nutrients, and what many people mistakenly eat are calories; the result, they are overfed and undernourished. The higher the nutrition in your food, the lesser you need to eat. Turning vegan has made me healthier. At the age of 56 I have more energy than when I was 25! I hardly fall sick, I don't have to rely on medication and my body never gives up on me. This to me is staying healthy in the real sense.