

Health on a plate

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By Nandita Shah

Dr Nandita Shah makes a passionate argument for the healing merits of whole plant-based nutrition

- A 21-year-old young man on three injections of insulin a day, was able to stop all this insulin in just three days. The blood sugars have been within normal limits since the last eight years.
- A 70-year-old woman with heart disease for three years was able to be free of all medications with the help of her cardiologist in just two-and-a-half months, and feel more energetic and healthy than she had in years.
- A 43-year-old woman with severe acidity was able to stop all antacids in just one week of changing her diet, and not suffer the symptoms any more.



What all three had in common was that their main therapy was food. Food can replace medicines! This sounds too simplistic to be true. But consider this: our body is always working to heal itself and remain healthy. The only thing that gets in the way of our

attaining near perfect health, is our own intellect. Like animals, we are born with the instinct that would keep us healthy for our entire lives. Unlike animals, we are taught by our society how to live and how to eat. Because the very first thing our parents teach us is what to eat, we lose the ability to access our instincts regarding food. Given the right conditions, our body usually heals. For example, a fracture will heal if the bones are set, preventing movement. Or a fever, even if we do nothing but just take rest, most likely will pass. In order to understand how to heal any disease, we need to understand the cause of it. Medicines can rarely help permanently heal disease. What they can do, at best, is remove symptoms or perhaps make us more comfortable. But this should not be the sole aim of any treatment, because it can prevent us from reaching our highest health potential, which is prevention and reversal of most common lifestyle diseases. Often the cause is the wrong fuel we put in our body.

What is the natural fuel for our body?

If you had a car, most likely the only fuel you would put in it would be petrol or diesel, depending on what the owner's manual suggested. You would not switch them around.

Similarly, we know that a lion should eat meat and a cow, grass. These animals don't need to be taught this; they know it by instinct. We are no less intelligent than animals in the wild. The only problem is that we have forgotten our instincts. But we can access them. Let's try to do it right now.

Imagine yourself in a farm or an orchard where you see fruits and vegetables growing. What is your instinct? Most likely you will say, to pick and eat these. Perhaps you have never been to a farm or orchard, as is the case with many city folks these days. It's worthwhile visiting one and experiencing your instincts. Instinctively, we are drawn to fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds.

When we see a field of wheat or rice, we don't usually salivate. That's because this is not the natural food for us. We are not cows. But we have learned to eat wheat and rice so much so that it has become a staple. No wonder people have gluten allergies. Similarly, if you were to walk through a village and see a chicken walk by, you are unlikely to salivate and chase the chicken. A dog would chase the chicken but is unlikely to salivate in a farm or orchard. Yet we have learned to eat chicken and even enjoy it. When it's served to us dressed and cooked on a plate, it's hard to resist. But we need to face up to the fact that it's not our natural food. The same is true of goats, pigs, cows, even fish and other animals that we consider normal to eat.

Consider milk. Every infant, when first given cow's milk, refuses it. Yet mothers, considering it an essential food, make every effort to forcefeed it to their children even at the risk of adding sugar, which they know is unhealthy. This is why there are so many additives for milk in the market. But we know that milk is a food which every mammal produces only for its young, and our children are not calves. Nor are we. We have learnt to enjoy dairy products but this is not a suitable food for our species. In nature no animal drinks another animal's milk. You never see goats drinking pig's milk or monkeys drinking elephant's milk. We are the only species that thinks it's normal to drink the milk of another species, even when we are not infants.

There are many other reasons, both anatomical and physiological, which point to the fact that human beings are herbivores, and not omnivores, as has been taught by our culture. For example, all carnivores drink by lapping, all herbivores drink by sipping. Or all carnivores eat a large meal and then don't eat for a long time, but herbivores, like ourselves, eat several times a day. Our digestive system is designed for plant-based nutrition, and when we eat

animal products we provoke illnesses. Imagine what would happen if we fed the cow meat, or the lion, grass, or if we would fuel a petrol car with diesel. Isn't it strange that we are fussy about the fuel we put in our cars, but care less about the fuel we put on our bodies?

Yes, we should eat mainly plants. But that alone is not enough. The maximum nutrition in plants is found just under the skin. When we refine foods or peel them, we're reducing their nutritive value.

What we need is plenty of fibre and nutrients. When we polish rice or wheat or peel our vegetables, we are losing a lot of nutrition.

When we refine peanuts or sesame to oil, we're losing all the fibre. So basically what we need is whole plant-based nutrition.

What else?

Today food is grown with chemicals and fertilisers rather than the way nature intended it to grow. Chemicals are hormone disruptors and we're facing a number of hormonal diseases today from thyroid problems to polycystic ovarian disease. We need to choose organic foods, grown in the way nature had intended.

Try as we might to live according to nature, we still face problems, especially in urban life, because of our artificial living conditions.

This results in a lack of Vitamins B12 and D. These should be tested and supplemented where needed.

Healing the mind

Disease is also caused by stress, and when we consume the products of animals under stress, we also imbibe their stress along with their adrenaline. It is amazing how much change occurs in the state of mind when one shifts to a completely plant-based diet! Enough said. Pass me the peas, please!