

## Beat Breast Cancer With a Vegan Diet - You Can Too!

By Elaine Sloan

As a breast cancer survivor, I'm particularly interested in studies showing the connection between breast cancer and diet. One recent study conducted by researchers at the Fox Chase Cancer Center, Harvard University, Shanghai Cancer Institute, and Vanderbilt University confirmed what a number of previous studies have shown: Women who eat meat are more likely to develop breast cancer than women who don't eat meat.

The researchers found that females who eat the typical Western-style diet containing lots of meat and sugar may have a higher risk of breast cancer compared to those who eat a typical Asian-style diet containing lots of soy and vegetables.

This news doesn't surprise me at all. I believe that my healthy vegan diet has kept me breast-cancer free for more than 13 years since I was diagnosed with the disease.

I was devastated when I first learned I had cancer. I didn't know where to turn, who to trust. For much of my life I ate meat, eggs, and dairy products. After my mastectomy, I knew I had to make some changes in my life to prevent another breast cancer occurrence in the future. My son, an animal rights activist and a health-conscious individual, suggested I switch to a vegan diet. I knew a significant diet change would be a step in saving my life in the future.

Animal products are high in fat, protein, and hormones, all of which increase cancer risks, but plant-based foods are low in fat and calories, high in fiber and complex carbohydrates, and cholesterol free. Studies have shown that women who eat healthy, low-fat diets (i.e. vegan diets) are less likely to develop breast cancer and other life-threatening diseases.

A Harvard Medical School study of more than 90,000 women revealed that the women who ate the most meat were nearly twice as likely to develop breast cancer as those who did not eat much meat. In a study out of Harbor-UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles, postmenopausal women undergoing treatment for early breast cancer were advised to follow a very low-fat diet, while others were instructed to eat a diet higher in fat. After five years, only 9.8 percent of the women on the low-fat diet had a recurrence of cancer, compared with 12.4 percent on the more traditional diet.

Another study, published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute 2003*, revealed that pre-menopausal women who ate a diet high in animal fat, not vegetable fat, had three times the breast cancer rate than women who ate a diet low in animal fat.

Health experts have long touted the benefits of a vegetarian diet. Dr. William Castelli, the

director of the Framingham Heart Study, the longest-running epidemiological study in medical history, says, “Vegetarians have the best diet. They have the lowest rates of coronary disease of any group in the country. [T]hey have a fraction of our heart attack rate and they have only 40 percent of our cancer rate.”

Dr. T. Colin Campbell, the author of *The China Study: Startling Implications For Diet, Weight Loss And Long-Term Health*, believes that animal protein is the most carcinogenic thing most people consume. Dr. Campbell went to China to study the relationship between diet and other lifestyle factors and degenerative diseases. His findings convinced him that a vegan diet is far healthier than a meat-based one. In “Why China Holds the Key to Your Health,” Dr. Campbell wrote, “The data from the China Project suggest that what we have come to consider as “normal” illnesses of aging are really not normal. In fact, these findings indicate that the vast majority perhaps 80 to 90% of all cancers, cardiovascular diseases, and other forms of degenerative illness can be prevented, at least until very old age, simply by adopting a plant-based diet.”

I’m convinced he’s right. Since I switched to a vegan diet, my energy level has increased, my cholesterol level has decreased, and I feel healthier overall. The best health benefit, however, is the peace of mind I get from knowing that I’m much less likely to have a breast cancer relapse. I encourage all women to eat a low-fat vegan diet. It is the best way to stay slim and healthy and also helps save animals and the environment. It’s easy to make the transition to a vegan diet. There are tips on [www.VegCooking.com](http://www.VegCooking.com).

*Elaine Sloan is a retired television commercial producer living in New York City. She is a vegan and vocal animal rights activist, She encourages others to eat a healthy, humane plant-based diet. When not promoting veganism, Elaine volunteers to rescue stray and neglected dogs and cats, and even traveled to New Orleans to help with the animals rescue efforts after Hurricane Katrina. She convinced the Avon Breast Cancer Crusade to use its funds to help women in need, not for animal experiments, and she won a Humanitarian Award from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals in 1999.*