

The plant-based revolution changing lives

Plant-based diets have surged into public consciousness with a [boom in sales](#) of mouth-watering 'milks', 'cheeses', and 'meats' made from plants. These cruelty-free foods are filling the demand for an alternative to the meat culture most of us grew up with. Where vegan diets were once associated only with animal welfare advocates, now sports stars Serena Williams and [Novak Djokovic](#) show that plant-based food is much more than kind. It can help us be at the top of our game. And [Venus Williams](#) shows age is no barrier on a plant-based diet. With benefits for health, animal welfare, and the environment, eating plants could be the path to contentment and fulfilment in midlife you never thought possible.

Plant-based foods keep us healthy

Dr Michael Greger, the author of *How Not to Die*, has been an advocate of plant-based nutrition since he watched the miraculous recovery of his grandmother from heart disease. Diagnosed with terminal heart disease, a plant-based diet unclogged her arteries and took her from wheelchair to walking in three weeks. She lived for another 31 years.

Through his globally-renowned website [nutritionfacts.org](#), Greger educates on how a plant-based diet can transform your health and change your life. Modern health issues, such as obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, cancer, and even Alzheimer's, can all be largely prevented and treated with a plant-based diet.

Western diets are implicated in our health crisis yet drugs are the go-to treatment even though whole foods offer a cheaper, safer option that empowers people in their own health outcomes. Plants are higher in fibre and lower in saturated fat and sugar than many animal foods, making weight loss achievable without starvation or stomach stapling. Plant foods are also less likely to cause spikes in blood sugar that leave us feeling fatigued and unable to focus.

National healthcare providers are waking up. [Health Canada's revised Food Guide](#) will place more emphasis on plants, potentially removing dairy as a separate food group. The first plant-based food conference will be held in the UK by Plant-Based Health Professionals UK, a new organization promoting lifestyle interventions to complement traditional health care. People aren't the only beneficiaries of a move towards plant-based nutrition.

Eating plants is kinder to animals

Farming is no longer recognizable for the caring animal husbandry shown in children's books and marketing ads. In modern animal farming, feedlots have replaced grassy fields as cattle are raised intensively on a diet of grain for greater yield and speedy slaughter. [Mercy for Animals](#) reports newborn calves taken from their mothers, deprived of their natural instinct to nurture and bond with their young. [Compassion in World Farming](#) shows hens held in cramped sheds by the thousands, laying eggs like machines and never seeing daylight.

Animals are stripped of their sentience as intensive modern farming places production and profit first. We might buy free-range or organic in the hope that animals have a kinder, more natural life. But unless we know the farm, can we be sure of how animals are treated? Even animals well-cared for have their life cut short in slaughterhouses where low-paid workers are prone to cruelty in dehumanising environments.

As women in midlife, having nurtured our own children or enjoyed a rewarding career, or both, we're better placed than ever to make choices that have a wider impact. By choosing a plant-based diet, we can free ourselves of a meat culture that supports unimaginable animal cruelty. And the benefits don't stop there.

Factory farming is causing a dead zone

Compassion in World Farming CEO Philip Lymbery describes the devastating impact of modern farming on the environment in his book *Dead Zone: Where the Wild Things Were*. Intensively-farmed animals are fed crops grown on land that was once covered in rainforest and home to a rich variety of wildlife. "Wildlife is now disappearing 1,000 times faster than what scientists consider to be 'normal'," [says Lymbery](#). In Sumatra, elephants and orang-utans are losing their habitat and facing extinction as palm plantations replace native rainforest. It isn't only palm oil used in human food that's driving destruction but palm kernel used in animal feed.

Intensive farming also impacts climate change, with [farm animal production causing more pollution](#) than the better-known culprits. National governments focus on transport and manufacturing fossil-fuel emissions but keep quiet about unsustainable food production. We don't have to wait for governments to act.

As women in midlife determined to make a difference, we can start making changes now. By ourselves, we're not going to solve any problems overnight. But together, consumers can drive widespread change. You only have to look at declining dairy sales and the rise in dairy-free alternatives to see consumer power in action. What are you waiting for? Be part of positive change for health, animal welfare and our environment!