Benefits of Plant-Based Diet in Black Adults

Plant-based diets may help Black adults lower cholesterol, blood pressure and lose weight.

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In observance of Minority Health Month this April, one cardiologist discussed how Black Americans can improve their health outcomes by increasing their intake of plant-based foods, Kaiser Permanente reports.

Regional chief of cardiology for Kaiser Permanente, Columbus Batiste, MD, said cutting out meat and increasing intake of fiber-rich plant-based foods has been "a lifesaver" for many of his patients in Southern California.

In the United States, nearly half (48%) of Black Americans have obesity, according to the American Psychological Association. The health risks associated with obesity include cancer, heart disease, diabetes and liver disease.

In fact, in both adolescents and adults, eating more ultra-processed food was linked to an increased risk of developing metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD), according to study results presented earlier this year at the AASLD Liver Meeting.

MASLD, the new name for non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, and its more severe form, metabolic dysfunction-associated steatohepatitis (MASH, formerly known as non-alcoholic steatohepatitis, or NASH), are responsible for a growing proportion of advanced liver disease worldwide. The buildup of fat in the liver can lead to inflammation, fibrosis, cirrhosis and even liver cancer.

When it comes to diet, studies show that Black people consume less vegetables, dietary fiber, whole grains, milk and other nutrients compared with white people. Batiste recommends switching to a plant-based diet, which has been shown to improve health outcomes and reduce health disparities in all populations. A Mediterranean diet, for example, emphasizes plant foods.

Batiste added that Black adults who closely adhere to a whole-food, plant-based diet can lose weight, lower blood pressure and improve cholesterol levels.

“Individuals who closely adhere to the diet demonstrate a 16% lower risk of death as well as a reduced susceptibility to heart attacks and strokes compared to those who don’t stick to the diet as closely,” Batiste told Kaiser Permanente.

To read more, click #Diet. There, you’ll find headlines such as “If Diet Influences Cancer, Then What Makes a Healthy Diet?” “One in Eight People Are Now Living With Obesity” and “New Breast Cancer Research Shows Importance of Diet and Exercise.”

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