

Women's Health

6 Signs You Might Want to Stop Following a Vegan Diet

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SHUTTERSTOCK

A vegan [diet](#) sounds pretty foolproof: What could really be so bad about loading up on veggies and fruits? Well, a few different things. “Veganism can be a great diet for many people, but there are certain situations where it may not be best for someone’s optimal health,” says Boston-based dietitian [Kate Scarlata](#), R.D. In some cases, veganism can even be dangerous, as Jordan Younger knows firsthand. The Instagram star amassed a fierce following as “The Blonde Vegan” but found that her seemingly smart habits became the perfect breeding ground for the [eating disorder orthorexia](#), which is characterized by an unhealthy obsession with healthy eating. While that doesn’t mean vegan diets are always harmful (check out the [right way to do it](#)), here are a few giveaways you should consider branching out.

You’re Constantly Bloated

“I see a lot of patients who say, ‘I just turned 30, I’m going to eat like a grown-up now!’ So they start with the kale smoothies—but soon they feel even worse,” says Scarlata. When you embark on a vegan [diet](#), you’ll start taking in a lot more FODMAPs (fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides and polyols) like beans and

legumes. FODMAPs are made up of carbohydrates, sugars, and fibers that draw water into your intestine. If you're sensitive to them, they can make you bloat, feeling like you're smuggling a water balloon under your shirt. "Sometimes bloating happens when you switch up your food, but if it persists for weeks, that may be a sign veganism isn't the right diet for you," says Scarlata.

You've Got a Family History of Osteoporosis

Dairy is the best source of calcium, so cutting it out means you've got to supplement in other ways. For most vegans, this is all well and good. But if you've got a family history of bone disorders like osteoporosis or osteopenia, you might want to rethink your choice. "It may be harder for you to truly meet your nutritional needs for calcium," says Scarlata. "Combined with your family history, even if you turn to supplements, it's something to consider."

You Feel Sluggish All the Time

Iron provides oxygen to the blood and is one of your body's best energy sources. "We rely on heme iron, and that comes from animals," says Scarlata. "Vegan diets consist of non-heme irons, which aren't absorbed by the blood as well." That can cause headaches or leave you feeling slow or weak. There's another reason veganism may result in a bout of droopiness if it isn't for you: pernicious anemia, which can happen when you're low on the B12 vitamin. "B12 only occurs naturally in animal products and is very important for a number of reactions in the body," says Scarlata. If your body can't get enough, you may be hit with symptoms like waves of dizziness and loss of appetite.

You're Becoming Obsessed with Food

Jordan Younger's story is extreme, but that doesn't mean it can't happen to other women, too. "If there's an unhealthy motivation behind a vegan [diet](#), that can be a red flag," says Scarlata. "It's an easy way to over-restrict." If you feel like you may be over-restricting under the guise of veganism, Scarlata suggests you ask yourself a few questions: Do you overthink everything you put in your mouth? Is your vegan diet becoming an all-consuming part of your life? Do you feel like you have serious fears about messing up your diet? If so, consult an expert to help determine whether you're still eating healthfully.

Your Glow Is Gone

Maybe you're extra pale. Or it could be that your hair is falling out more than usual or your nails are brittle and yellow. All of these are signs that you may not be getting the nutrients you need from your current diet. "You have to listen to those clues your body is giving you," says Scarlata. "It's very adept at telling you what's going on." One major reason you may lose your luster on a vegan diet is a lack of protein. "When you're vegan, you have to be that much more vigilant about protein because it's not as innate to your diet. All of the enzymes in your body are proteins that help your systems function. If your body doesn't get enough, it will break down its own protein storage to create what it needs to exist." That can result in not loving what you see in the mirror (even though that's probably the last thing you'd expect from a vegan diet). Plus, animal proteins are packed with all the essential amino acids, which help keep you looking vibrant and healthy. As a vegan, it can be harder to get your fill of those beauty-boosters.

You're Gaining Weight

Vegan isn't synonymous with healthy. "You can still be a vegan and eat a bag of potato chips," says Scarlata. Much like with [gluten-free diets](#), it can actually take extra effort to be healthy on a vegan eating plan. "You have to invest the time in understanding how to eat balanced meals and making sure your diet is plentiful in things like calcium, iron, and B12, instead of going out and buying dairy-free vegan cookies," says Scarlata. If you're finding it easier to default to the less-healthy vegan options rather than going the extra mile to make sure you're covering all your bases, it may be time to take a break.

<http://www.womenshealthmag.com/nutrition/signs-to-reconsider-vegan-diet>