



THE REDUCETARIAN WAY



If you want to cut down on eating animal products but don't think that being vegetarian or vegan is for you, then a reducetarian approach might be the right compromise. **Celia Jarvis** writes

In 2009, Sir Paul McCartney (music royalty and celebrity vegetarian) launched the Meat Free Monday campaign. His late wife Linda had built a thriving business out of vegetarian foods that can now be found on almost every high street, and was a prominent campaigner for vegetarianism.

In November 2017, the campaign was given a fresh re-launch with the release of a five-minute film about the impact of agriculture on the environment. Using a series of cleverly-shot moments worthy of a BBC documentary, it shows the beauty of the Earth, before ending with some statistics on the impact of meat and fish production.

Ultimately, those behind the campaign

would like to see people change to vegetarianism, but the polite and probably more realistic request is for meat-eaters to not eat animal products for just one day each week.

The campaign doesn't use the term 'reducetarian' but this is a new label being used to categorise someone like Cameron Deighton, a personal trainer and model, who has chosen to cut down on red meat without a longer-term view of vegetarianism.

Deighton doesn't hesitate when asked why he's cut down on red meat. "After eating it I'd feel sluggish and low in energy. It tasted alright, but I could feel that it wasn't doing much for my body," he says.

"Also, my family aren't keen on red meat so it wasn't hard to give it up."

Deighton may not consider himself a reducetarian but according to Brian Kateman, author of *The Reducetarian Solution*,¹ that's what he is, and one of a growing number of people who have consciously decided to eat less meat. Reducetarians aren't as rigid as vegetarians or vegans, but they are still committed to cutting down on meat, fish, and animal products.

Kateman describes the reducetarian ethos as: "Accessible, attainable and achievable. You don't need to become vegetarian or vegan — or feel like you're failing. You just reduce the amount of animal products you eat."

And, according to the Reducetarian Foundation's website www.reducetarian.org less meat and more fruits and vegetables mean reducetarians live longer, healthier, and happier lives. It's a bold claim but one that has, partly, been backed by research.

Various studies have shown a positive correlation between eating less meat and enjoying better health. In 2006, Dr Michael Orlich² of Loma Linda University, USA, studied the diet and health of over 70,000 male and female seventh-day Adventists. Six years later, he followed up with his participants and found that those who were vegetarian, vegan or semi-vegetarian were 12 per cent less likely to die from any cause, compared to those who ate meat.

However, Orlich did note that the vegetarian participants in his study chose other health supporting behaviours; they drank less alcohol, exercised more frequently and were less likely to smoke. In short, their overall lifestyle was wholesome — making it hard to attribute their longer lives completely to their vegetarian lifestyle.

In 2015,³ however, after the International Agency for the Research of Cancer (IARC) asked experts to review over 800 studies looking at the effects of eating meat on health, it was found that eating 50 g of preserved meat on a daily basis — the equivalent to two slices of bacon — increased the risk of colon cancer from six per cent to seven per cent. Preserved meat was eventually classified by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a 'group one' carcinogen — the same as tobacco and asbestos.

The review also looked at the health impact of eating unprocessed red meat, for example lamb, beef, pork or goat. Although the correlation was not as strong, the researchers found that eating

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50 g of unprocessed red meat a day was suspected to be carcinogenic to humans.

Together, these studies appear to make a compelling case for consuming less meat, although Kateman states: "Anyone in the developed world would benefit from eating more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes and fewer animal products. Of course, listen to your body and see how you feel and adjust accordingly, but the benefits have been demonstrated time and time again."

Nutritional therapist Bethany Cox, of St Albans-based practice Eat Breathe and Believe, agrees, but always urges her clients to plan for a meat replacement.

"Protein is one of the biggest healers; it supports everything, and any animal product is complete protein, it has every amino acid that the body needs," she says. "You can get protein from plant-based sources too, but they are incomplete proteins so you need to eat a variety to get your full protein requirements which takes a little more thought."

But if a reducetarian diet is beneficial for health, then it may be even better for our planet. A 2006 UN study⁴ revealed that agricultural farming is the number one cause of devastation to the environment. Raising livestock produces more greenhouse emissions than the entire worldwide transport industry — something that came to general awareness in 2014, after the Netflix film *Cowspiracy*⁵ was released.

This was followed in 2016⁶ when research revealed that reducing meat consumption created a hat-trick of benefits: improved human health, significantly decreased healthcare costs, and reduced greenhouse gasses.

Environmentally-conscious personal trainer Hannah Lewin recounts her route to becoming reducetarian.

"I was unpacking a weekly shop and sorting out packaging for recycling, and I suddenly became very aware of the amount of packaging for meat-based products versus loosely bought vegetables. This stayed with me for a little while, and I decided to explore the environmental effects of meat consumption. I was pretty shocked by what I read and the scale of the problem."

After discovering that global meat production involved the clearance of natural habitats to create pasture, and that CO2 emissions from cattle and sheep were a large contributory factor to global warming, Lewin changed her eating habits.

"For me it's been a gradual process, I now eat meat two or three days per week rather than most days, and I've had a mindset change — I couldn't go back."

REDUCETARIANISM MADE EASY

- **Keep it flexible:** The aim is to cut down, rather than out, on meat. If you manage only one meat free day a week it will still have a positive impact on the environment and be health supporting
- **Embrace Meat Free Monday:** By choosing meat free days, it's more likely to become a habit. Check out [#MeatFreeMonday](#) on Twitter and Facebook for ideas and support
- **Plan vegetarian meals that will satisfy your taste buds as well as your appetite so that you aren't left craving meat**
- **Make use of resources:** The reducetarian lifestyle is well established and there are lots of tasty and balanced recipes online www.reducetarian.org/recipes-all/ but if you have concerns, or want more support, find a nutritional therapist via the Optimum Nutrition Clinic at www.ion.ac.uk or www.bant.org.uk

References:

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