

FOOD MATTERS

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VEGETARIAN DIET SAVES LIVES

Coronary heart disease is our nation's biggest killer but, according to research presented at the recent Sanitarium International Nutrition Symposium, switching to a vegetarian diet can prolong your life. It is estimated that switching to a vegetarian diet could save over 8500 lives each year—and that's just from risk reduction of heart disease.

Convincing evidence exists that vegetarians are 24 per cent less likely to die of heart disease than their meat-eating peers.

What's protective in a vegetarian diet? Scientists emphasise the importance of the whole package of protective foods and nutrients found in a vegetarian diet, as it is difficult to disentangle the major components responsible for lowering the risk of heart disease.

Some of the factors in a vegetarian diet that lower blood cholesterol include:

- lower saturated fat content
- lower cholesterol content
- higher plant protein content, particularly soya protein
- higher plant sterol content
- higher viscous dietary fibre

content, for instance, oats, psyllium, gums and pectins.

But we are starting to wise up! Aussies and Kiwis may be starting to recognise the benefits of a plant-based diet. A recent News-poll survey found nearly half (46 per cent) of the adults in Australia and 23 per cent in New Zealand claimed to be eating more vegetarian meals than they did a couple of years ago.

This trend toward more plant-based eating is a good thing. But remember, the more plant foods you eat each day, the greater the health rewards are likely to be.

But judge for yourself just how delicious vegetarian food can taste. *See page 38* for some healthful, vegetarian recipes.

