

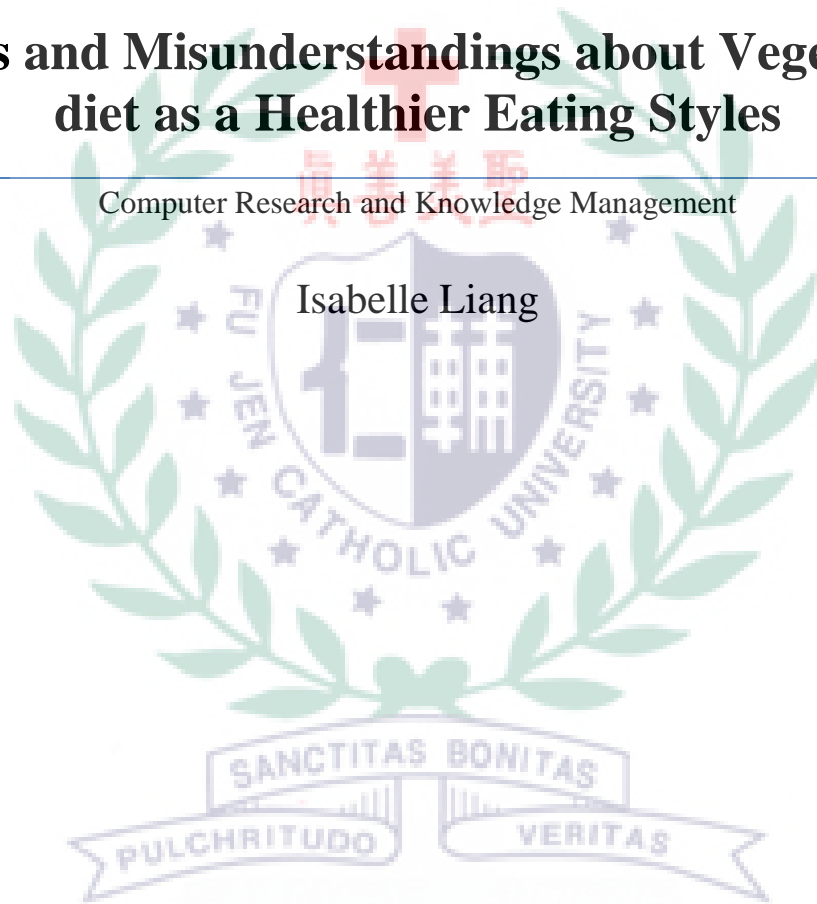
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# **Myths and Misunderstandings about Vegetarian diet as a Healthier Eating Styles**

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Computer Research and Knowledge Management

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## Myths and Misunderstandings about Vegetarian diet as a Healthier Eating Style

### **Abstract**

The idea that vegetarian diet equals to a healthy diet has been a topic of debate for many years. This research paper provide three reasons to support the statement that vegetarian diet is not a healthier eating style compare with non-vegetarian diet. The three reasons are: first, vegetarian diet is not a balanced diet, vegetarian diet's exclusion of animal foods is actually not healthy and vegetarian diet cannot prevent people from cancer or chronic diseases. Three essays in total are valid to support the above three reasons. The findings are positive due to the authentic supporting claims provided in these sources.

### **Introduction**

Whenever discussing about what a healthy diet means, most people will immediately come up with the answer "a veggie diet." This impression has proved that the idea of a vegetarian diet equals to health has stick to most people's minds as a definite answer. Furthermore, many researchers have enhanced the idea that a vegetarian diet is better than non-vegetarian diet in terms of health. These people believe vegetarian diet will provide them sufficient nutrition and avoid them from consuming animal foods that may lead them to health problem, such as heart disease and cancer. However, some researchers disagree with this idea and argue that there are actually some risks and misunderstandings when practicing a long-term vegetarian diet. There are three reasons why vegetarian diet may not be a healthier eating style as many thought: it is not a

balanced diet, its exclusion of animal foods is actually not healthy and it cannot prevent people from cancer or chronic diseases.

### **Research purpose**

There are three research purposes in this paper. First is to redefine what a healthy diet is: a balanced diet of both meat and vegetables; second is to find out some disadvantages when practicing a vegetable diet; and third is to find out what is the best way for people to eat in terms of vegetarian and non-vegetarian diet.

### **Question**

- Is vegetarian diet really healthier?
- Are there any misunderstandings when comparing vegetarian diet and non-vegetarian diet?
- What are the myths of vegetarian diet?
- What are the disadvantages when practicing a vegetarian diet?

### **Literature Review**

In "Why I am Not a Vegetarian," William Jarvis argues that nowadays some people practice vegetarian diet without an actual understanding of these foods, but they rely on some ideologies revolving around the society as truth. This source is able to answer three research questions: "Are there any misunderstandings when comparing vegetarian diet and non-vegetarian diet?" and "What are the myths of vegetarian diet?" and "What are the disadvantages when practicing a vegetarian diet?"

In "Is Veganism A Better Way Of Life?" Sally Fallon and Bruce Friedrich argue different perspectives on vegetarian diet and non-vegetarian diet in three ways: vegetarian diet's possible health, moral and environmental benefits. This source is able to answer two questions: "Is vegetarian diet really healthier?" and "Are there any misunderstandings when comparing vegetarian diet and non-vegetarian diet?"

In “Would We Be Healthier With a Vegan Diet?” the writer provides two different perspectives from two nationalists to argue whether vegetarian diet is really healthier. This source is able to answer three research questions: “Are there any misunderstandings when comparing vegetarian diet and non-vegetarian diet?” and “What are the myths of vegetarian diet?” and “What are the disadvantages when practicing a vegetarian diet?”

### **Methodology**

This paper is composed with the help of literature review. Two essays and one online article are used to support my hypotheses. The two essays (“Why I am Not a Vegetarian” and “Is Veganism A Better Way Of Life?”) are found in Fu Jen University library provided by the database Academic Search Complete. As a result, these two articles are academic papers. The other source (“Would We Be Healthier With a Vegan Diet?”) is found in an American magazine *Wall Street Journal*'s online website.

Five essays are found in total in the beginning, but two articles are later exclude due to their invalidity to support some hypotheses and claims. The above three articles are analyzed in three ways: validity, credibility and supportiveness.

### **Finding**

Vegetarian diet has been misunderstood as healthy diet due to people's lack of understanding about the nutrient value of animal foods. Animal foods are essential to human beings as people are able to get certain nutrient, such as vitamin B12, only through the consumption of these foods. Not only so, people are also unaware of their misunderstandings about the true definition of a healthy eating style. Balanced diet, for example, is important to provide people a little bit of something, but vegetarian diet is in fact not a balanced diet.

### **Discussion**

This research have found that vegetarian diet may not be necessary healthy as we think. Its exclusion of animal foods is not able to provide a balanced diet and the

impossibility to prove such diet can prevent cancer or chronic disease. Most of the previous studies are focusing on the disadvantages of these diets, but this research paper focus on these disadvantages that can misunderstand others perception of a healthy diet. Unfortunately, this research is limited to provide more examples to prove vegetarian diet as problematic since the overall findings are still developing.

## Conclusion

The idea that vegetarian diet is healthy has been over-emphasized in our society since there are many food scandals in recent years. However, this idea cast most people away from the true meaning of a healthy diet. The above clarifications have proved that vegetarian diet is not as healthy as people normally think. Vegetarian diet is not a healthy diet as it ignores the consumption of animal foods, and to many people's surprises it cannot prevent people from cancer or chronic diseases. As a result, it is important for people who practice a vegetarian diet for health to rethink these disadvantages that may affect their long-term health condition.

## References

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## Myths and Misunderstandings about Vegetarian diet as a Healthier Eating Style

Whenever discussing about what a healthy diet means, most people will immediately come up with the answer “a veggie diet.” This impression has proved that the idea of a vegetarian diet equals to health has stick to most people’s minds as a definite answer. Furthermore, many researchers have enhanced the idea that a vegetarian diet is better than non-vegetarian diet in terms of health. These people believe vegetarian diet will provide them sufficient nutrition and avoid them from consuming animal foods that may lead them to health problem, such as heart disease and cancer. However, some researchers disagree with this idea and argue that there are actually some risks and misunderstandings when practicing a long-term vegetarian diet. There are three reasons why vegetarian diet may not be a healthier eating style as many thought: it is not a balanced diet, its exclusion of animal foods is actually not healthy and it cannot prevent people from cancer or chronic diseases.

The first misunderstanding is that people often take vegetarian diet as good enough for people to live a healthy life. However, this statement does not consider a balanced diet as more important to people’s daily lives. In the article “Would We be Healthier With a Vegan Diet?” Nancy Rodriguez, a professor of nutritional sciences at the University of Connecticut, argues that “it’s healthy to eat meat and dairy products as part of a balanced diet that includes each of the major food groups[.]” People are not aware of the fact that their preference over one kind of diet is not healthy enough to provide them the real nutrient they need in daily life. Furthermore, this kind of diet may gradually damage their health condition.

The second misunderstanding is that vegetarian diet is better than non-vegetarian diet because it does not contain any animal products. In William Jarvis's article "Why I am not a Vegetarian," he points out that "[t]he term "vegetarian" is misleading, for it is not a name for people who favor vegetable consumption, but a code word for those who disfavor or protest the consumption of animal foods." This is to say people determine the value of vegetarian diet only by its exclusion of animal foods. In fact, "animal foods provide nutrients unavailable from plant foods, including vitamin B12, vitamin A, vitamin D, coenzyme Q10 and important long chain fatty acids, such as DHA and EPA" (Fallon and Friedrich 20). There are still important nutrient values that only animal foods will be able to provide to human bodies. In addition, Rodriguez points out that "[i]nsufficient calcium and vitamin D can compromise bone structure. Lack of zinc can hinder growth in children. B12 and iron assist production of red blood cells, which deliver oxygen throughout the body" ("Would We Be Healthier With a Vegan Diet?"). The lack of important nutrient in vegetarian diet will actually damage a person's health condition.

The third misunderstanding is that vegetarian diet is able to prevent people from cancer or some chronic diseases. T. Colin Campbell, a professor at Cornell University claims that "[h]igher-protein diets achieved by consuming animal-based foods increase the risks of cancer, cardiovascular diseases and many similar ailments, caused by excess protein and other unbalanced nutrients as well"(qtd. in "Would We Be Healthier With a Vegan Diet?"). Even he supports his claim with scientific support, there are still flaws in his statement. Campbell mentions the consumption style of higher-protein diet as "excessive," but in fact the first paragraph has emphasized the importance of "a balanced diet." There is no doubt that over consumption of a certain food will cause

health problem. As a matter of fact, the extreme diet of vegetarian is actually more excessive than non-vegetarian diet; since there is no animal food to provide sufficient nutrient to human body. Therefore, the fact that “cholesterol-lowering [will result in] an increase in deaths from intestinal diseases, stroke, cancer, accidents and suicide” (Fallon and Friedrich 22). Additionally, Rodriguez points out that “not smoking, responsible alcohol consumption, maintaining a healthy weight and regular physical activity, are much more important to reducing cancer risk than eating or avoiding any individual food” (qtd. in “Would We Be Healthier With a Vegan Diet?”). In this case, the exclusion of animal foods in vegetarian diet is not the main cause of chronic disease, but most important of all, a vegetarian diet does not even prevent people from having serious illness.

The idea that vegetarian diet is healthy has been over-emphasized in our society since there are many food scandals in recent years. However, this idea cast most people away from the true meaning of a healthy diet. The above clarifications have proved that vegetarian diet is not as healthy as people normally think. Vegetarian diet is not a healthy diet as it ignores the consumption of animal foods, and to many people’s surprises it cannot prevent people from cancer or chronic diseases. As a result, it is important for people who practice a vegetarian diet for health to rethink these disadvantages that may affect their long-term health condition.