Fruitarian teens: Are they stunting their growth?  [1]

Dear Alice,

I am a vegetarian and would like to become a fruitarian. I am a fifteen-year-old girl. Would this diet have any effects on my growth? If not, what would be a safe diet as a fruitarian?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Feeling fruity? Devoted fruitarians say they feel better eating in this style, that it makes their life easy, and they feel it is beneficial for the environment. Fruitarian diets include all sweet fruits and vegetable fruits ? including (but not limited to) tomato, cucumber, peppers, olives, avocados, and squash. Some fruitarians add grains, beans, nuts, and seeds to their eating plans. If these foods are included, the proportions are generally about 70 - 80 percent sweet and vegetable fruits, with some beans, smaller amounts of grains and tofu, and a sprinkling of nuts and seeds. Many fruitarians prefer to eat their food raw. Depending on which items are included, some may have to be cooked.

The human body needs a variety of nutrients. Because fruitarian diets provide fewer calories and protein than vegetarian diets, they are not suitable for teens. For a teen, the implications of missing many nutrients can have long lasting effects. Following this eating plan can cause your body to fall short on calcium, protein, iron, zinc, vitamin D, most B vitamins (especially B-12), and essential fatty acids. Not only could your height be affected, your bones may not reach their peak density, and vital nutrients for nervous system development may be missing in your diet. It's important to understand that one food cannot provide the multitude of nutrients found in a mixed eating plan.

Such a restrictive eating plan for a teen also presents other concerns. Have you thought about why you feel this eating style might be right for you, and what the ramifications also could be? If you're considering fruitarianism as a means to lose weight, or deflect attention from food issues, you are better off addressing these concerns directly. Restrictive eating can lead to hunger, cravings, and food obsessions. Also, keep in mind that a diet of one food (or of one food group) is not an effective way to cleanse the body.

As you move into adulthood, you may become interested in trying out different diets to improve your health and nutrition. For your future reference, it is recommended that adults only adhere to a fruitarian diet for a limited period of time. This is because fruitarian adults (just like their teen counterparts) can experience deficiencies in calcium, protein, iron, zinc,
vitamin D, most B vitamins (especially B12), and essential fatty acids.

Lastly, keep in mind that a limited diet may cause certain social disruptions. Meals with family and friends may become more difficult. Some people with less flexible food options report social isolation.

Just planting a few seeds to think about. Now let your knowledge grow!

Alice!

Category:
Nutrition & Physical Activity [2]
Optimal Nutrition [3]
Vegetarianism [4]
Miscellaneous [5]

Related questions

Pros and cons of vegetarianism [6]
Does vegetarianism affect teen growth and development? [7]
What to eat? [8]
How to eat your veggies, even if you don't like them [9]
Ooh, baby, I like it raw (or, is a raw diet healthy?) [10]

Published date:
Aug 23, 2002
Last reviewed on:
Jul 28, 2015

Footer menu

Contact Alice!
  ◦ Content Use
  ◦ Media Inquiries
  ◦ Comments & Corrections

Syndication & Licensing
  ◦ Licensing Q&As
  ◦ Get Alice! on Your Website
  ◦ Full Site Syndication
  ◦ Link to Go Ask Alice!

Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

Source URL: http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/fruitarian-teens-are-they-stunting-their-growth#comment-0

Links