



Raw Vegan Myths
DEBUNKED



**An investigation into 10 myths from in and
around the raw vegan movement**
Ronnie Smith

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An investigation into 10 myths from in and around the raw vegan movement.

By Ronnie Smith

myth

/mɪθ/

noun

1. a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events.
2. **a widely held but false belief or idea.**

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Introduction

How myths form and spread

Around every area of interest, a community gathers. Whether in the physical world at festivals, conferences and retreats or in the form of online forums, those communities come together to meet and talk about their experiences. This leads to the dissemination of ideas and experiences which helps to further the knowledge of the collective and leads to innovation and improvement. But in such situations myths and mistruths can develop and spread throughout the group.

Unusual ideas can spread like wildfire when they catch the human imagination and people can lose all sense of rational thinking. Humans are vulnerable to inherent biases and fallacies that appeal to the human mind but are also led astray from accurate thinking by false ideas shared with them from their earliest days of life. There are many ideas that appeal strongly to human nature that do not necessarily have any real connection with the truth.

In the world of the financial markets for example, where you would imagine that the best and brightest intellects would use numbers and rational analysis to make their decisions, collective manias often develop fueled by ego, pride, greed, fear of missing out and the herd mentality of human nature.

These events are unpreventable as following along with the momentum of the group is such a strong part of human nature. As highly social animals, and one that relies on community and collective effort to survive, humans have long realised that going along with the group may be essential for survival. It is hard to go against the internal evolutionary wiring that drives us to act in alignment with our group even when we have evidence that the group is acting towards its own detriment.

The Madness Of Crowds

The phenomenon of irrational collective behaviour was written about in the famous 1852 book *"The Madness of Crowds"* by Charles Mackay.

This book documented the "tulip mania" that occurred in the 17th century in the Netherlands. At that time, a mania developed around tulip bulbs as their prices were rising quickly. This led to claims that individual tulip bulbs were being sold for the equivalent of 5 hectares of land or 10 times the annual salary of a skilled artisan.

The bubble burst rapidly and tulips fell in value dramatically. It's hard to imagine this happening over tulips, but this exact phenomenon has occurred again and again. If even financial traders and bankers are vulnerable to their emotions leading them to irrational actions, I would suggest that none of us are immune to getting caught up in popular delusions.

We must always be aware of this but it is probably most important when it comes to our health. As Mark Twain said

"Be careful about reading health books, you can die of a misprint"¹

Incorrect health information can lead to terrible outcomes for people. Even just one piece of bad advice can destroy a person's health if applied.

Often within the natural health movement the problem can be more to do with neglecting to take action in favour of hoping that the body alone can take care of the problem. Though this is appropriate in some scenarios, in others it is extremely dangerous and can lead to disability and death.

The issue is so concerning that there are strict rules in the developed countries of the world around who can diagnose and treat illness and the various limits placed on those behaviours. Humans are gullible (especially in times of health crisis) to false "magic bullet" solutions.

¹ https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/mark_twain_105716

In their book, *“The Pleasure Trap”*, Dr Doug Lisle and Dr Alan Goldhammer suggested that humans like all animals have an evolutionary drive to move towards pleasure, stay away from pain and conserve energy as much energy in the process.

This is why, for example, we tend to be most attracted towards foods that take the least effort to eat while also having the most delicious flavour.

When someone is in a crisis with their health and nothing else seems to be working, “magic bullet” solutions become very appealing. Changing diet, losing weight, starting an exercise programme, drinking more water, taking time to meditate each day, changing your mindset, thinking more positively, moving to the country to get more fresh air and giving up alcohol, cigarettes and drugs are all complicated and difficult things to do. Doing them altogether can truly be impossible for many people.

Though these lifestyle changes may be the most effective route to better health in many scenarios, most people run away from that level of complexity due to the perceived amounts of effort and difficulty involved and it is in our nature to attempt to avoid that level of effort.

They would much rather investigate easier sounding options and it is in our nature to seek these out. Magic bullet options not only sound more appealing but are far more compelling.

Because of this, over the years many people set themselves up as fake doctors, gurus and health practitioners of all kinds. They promised great healing with their special medicines, tonics, elixirs and therapies and people flocked to them in droves.

The Curious Tale Of Dr J.R Brinkley

One of these “doctors” was Dr J. R Brinkley. You have probably never heard of Brinkley, but at one time he was one of the most famous doctors in the USA if not the world. He was also one of the most well

paid doctors in the country at the time amassing a fortune of millions of dollars.

His famous treatment?

He would implant the testicles of goats into men in order to cure impotence. At the time he was charging close to \$10,000 per operation. As bizarre as this operation sounds, many intelligent people lined up for this treatment convinced by his highly manipulative advertising campaigns and what seemed like the popularity and success of the treatment.

The glands were not only seen as a cure for impotence but a cure all for all sorts of issues. Even women had them transplanted to help with a number of issues related to female health.

How can such an idea spread and perhaps even seem to have success? We must remember that occasionally when it comes to any condition there may be a psychosomatic element to it. What this means is that something in the mind of the person is creating or exacerbating the issue. In essence their “belief” that they are unwell or in pain actually contributes towards the manifestation of the issue.

If something therefore comes along that changes that belief then it can be seen to have “cured” the problem. This well known phenomenon is known as “the placebo effect” and it is so strong that scientific researchers must account for it by controlling for it in scientific studies. Results achieved without controlling for the placebo effect are seen to be less reliable.

Therefore it is certainly possible that some patients of Brinkley, having an emotional or mental issue leading to impotence (rather than a physical issue) would be “cured” if they believed strongly enough that their problem was solved by the implantation of goat glands. Brinkley could use stories like this to make others fall for his quackery.

(Of course the goat glands were never proved to have any effect. In reality they were simply placed inside the scrotum and the human body absorbed it as a foreign object). Brinkley was eventually sued for medical malpractice and lost his entire fortune.

The reality can be hard to face

This is just one of many examples of completely ineffective treatments being coupled with effective marketing and promotion to create masses of people suffering from the same delusion. If you think you are immune to it, think again!

The reality of illness can be hard to face. Reality in itself can be hard to face leading to the common phrase “the harsh reality”. If someone has lost their health and it seems like there is no cure, it can be very easy to start to believe in magic or at least wish that an easy magic remedy existed. When magic remedies are presented they can be almost irresistible.

How can we equip ourselves against falling for these delusions and being led down a path towards poor health results?

Are raw vegans too smart to fall for health myths?

“But Ronnie”, I hear you say, “you are talking about the unenlightened masses. I am an educated person that has found the panacea of health with a raw vegan diet and lifestyle, surely I am no longer vulnerable to such myths?”. If only this were true!

Sadly, it seems to be the case that a different set of myths circulate around the raw vegan movement and the wider natural and alternative health movement. There are many ideas that you may have assumed were accurate as you have heard them repeated over and over again often by seemingly trustworthy sources.

In this book I hope to debunk many of the common delusions, fantasies and myths held dearly by those in the alternative health and raw vegan

movements. I hope to share some evidence to persuade you that these often commonly held ideas simply have no foundation in truth.

You have no idea how dangerous some of these ideas can be. Some range in being dangerous to your wellbeing but others will simply be a waste of time and a financial drain for no obvious return.

Simple principles of healing and health

To start, here are some principles you may wish to take to heart on your healing journey that will help you avoid the nonsense and orient yourself more quickly towards your goals of healing and the creation of optimal health:

- 1) Healing may require complicated, difficult and extreme actions often related to changing lifestyle habits, especially a drastic change to diet in order for the healing to occur.
- 2) Healing takes time. A long time. Perhaps much longer than you are prepared for. But that is the reality.
- 3) Healing may require 100% commitment. No deviation from the programme that works at any time. Any deviation no matter how small may completely set back the process.
- 4) The process of healing is entirely conducted, created and performed by the incredible intelligence of your body. No outside object, food, therapy, herb, supplement, powder, magic potion exerts a healing action on the body.
- 5) There are physical limits to what the body is capable of healing (we have yet to see anyone regrow an amputated arm). In those situations, modern medicine may be able to bridge the gap to support the body in the healing process. Cases of infection and the use of antibiotics are a great example of this but there are many more.

- 6) Good health is our natural state. The healing process is simply the body bringing the body back to normal.
- 7) There is no guarantee that complete recovery of health will occur. Unfortunately, even when we give the body the best support we can give it, there are times in which disease or damage have reached a point of no return in which complete recovery is not physically possible. It is always better to try to prevent disease than hope to reverse it.

The risk of following the herd

Recently, a fuel shortage crisis was sparked in the UK. Reports of a few closed petrol stations caught the attention of the public and queues started to form at petrol stations around the country. A reporter asked one driver in the queue “Why are you queuing?”. The reply was “Because everyone else is doing it”.

In life we should be careful to not get carried along by the huge pressure of wanting to follow the herd. Look at the results of the average person whether it comes to their health or other life outcomes. If you want to achieve a different result you must become sceptical of following along with what everyone else is doing.

One time I was in a taxi in New York with my friend Ted. We entered into a conversation about diet with our taxi driver and told him about the raw vegan lifestyle. The taxi driver said “what you are doing sounds extreme”. Ted’s reply was “yes extremely healthy, extremely passionate, extremely in love with fruit!”

Good health has become an extreme result in our modern world when it should be commonplace. The volume of misinformation is colossal. Millions of books are sold each year with diets that can not back up the majority of their claims with anything evidential.

Supplements are sold by the billions despite all evidence showing no benefit or even a detriment to their consumption. These profitable

industries are able to pump out huge amounts of misinformation into the world through traditional and modern forms of media including social media and through getting stories printed in the mass media often masquerading as genuine scientific breakthroughs.

It can be remarkably hard to wade through the ocean of misinformation to find truth. But if you are already at the point of following the raw vegan lifestyle or something approaching that, then you are already well on your way. In this book, I will not go over many of the mistruths you may have already dumped from your memory regarding the standard diet. I hopefully don't have to explain to you why meat is not a good source of protein and milk is not essential for making strong bones for example.

Instead, in this book I focus on debunking or in some cases simply calling to attention mistruths, myths, inconsistencies or a lack of evidence surrounding many commonly held ideas in the raw vegan community. I also touch upon myths that people believe about raw vegans (though sadly, sometimes even raw vegans buy into these myths). I cover bogus health practices that often seem connected to the raw vegan movement (despite rarely being taken seriously by most leaders and teachers in the raw vegan world).

These are ideas that I have seen promoted and shared in raw vegan forums and at raw vegan events. Occasionally these ideas are being shared by leaders in the movement, sometimes they are simply commonly held ideas in the community in general that thrive despite receiving little support from the main leaders and educators.

If you are not concerned about being taken in by poor ideas you should be. It is a tragedy when people take the time and effort to improve their health through dietary and lifestyle transformation only to later harm their health through negligence or action caused by one incorrect idea they were convinced by.

Still think it is not serious? Think again. In this book I will share real accounts of people coming to serious harm through falling prey to such delusions.

I wish you good luck on your path to a healthy life and an uninhibited and fun journey towards the path of truth.

Ronnie Smith, October 2021

Author's Note

Thank you for taking the time to read this book. My wish is for it to be accepted around the world that a fruit based raw vegan diet is the healthiest diet for humanity. I believe, though this has yet to be tested, that our adoption of this diet as a species will not only allow us to live in superb health but will lead to rapid improvements in our environment and of course the welfare of animals. My hunch is that crime will drop hugely, mental health issues will be alleviated and worldwide hunger and nutritional issues will largely vanish. Human creativity will expand and reach new horizons. We will feel like we are living in a perpetual golden age fueled by an ever growing abundant variety of tremendous fruit varieties.

On top of this, no longer will vast sums of time, energy and money go towards researching health issues that will be a thing of the past. Our greatest and brightest minds will no longer die early from chronic disease and will contribute more and be longer in their prime. Our great athletes will lead much longer careers and the collective well of human wisdom will greatly flourish with more and more people living well into old age and be able to continue to be productive and active in the world.

In short, the raw vegan diet can remove an enormous burden from humanity and free us to take flight to create a paradise environment for all. Unlike other suggested solutions, a worldwide shift to this diet will actually have this intended impact. Does this sound a tad optimistic? Perhaps, but as John Lennon said :

“You may say I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one”

We all dream of such a world. Deep down we have a drive to move towards a better life and find our paradise. The raw vegan diet may be humanity's ticket towards that paradise for all.

To interact with me more you can follow any of the following resources:

Love Fruit Email Newsletter - (subscribe and receive the 21 days of inspiration series): <http://bit.ly/lovefruitnewsletter>

Love Fruit Podcast- We are quickly heading towards 100 unique interviews with raw vegans from around the world. The podcast features many experts and legends from the movement.

Listen to the podcast: <http://bit.ly/lovefruitpodcast>

Watch the video playlist: <http://bit.ly/watchlovefruit>

UK Fruitfest - An annual raw vegan festival that has been running since 2014 in England. Not even the pandemic held us back! Learn more at <http://www.fruitfest.co.uk>

My Youtube Channel- I've been documenting my raw vegan journey on Youtube since 2012. You can follow me here: <https://www.youtube.com/c/FruityRonster>

Coaching/Support- Feel free to contact me about this here <https://fruitfest.co.uk/coaching/>

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1. The Myth Of The Nutrient Deficient Raw Vegan Diet

Look up virtually any article on a raw vegan diet and it is likely that at some part in the article there will be a claim of the risk of deficiency.

Check the top few Google search results for “raw vegan diet” and we find this article from Healthline.com which suggests:

“A raw vegan diet devoid of supplements can be low in vitamin B12, iodine, calcium and vitamin D and may provide too little protein and too few calories, leading to an array of health issues. It may also cause tooth decay and fertility issues.”

The second result from Everydayhealth.com states:

“people who follow a raw vegan diet are at increased risk of not getting enough vitamin B12, calcium, and iron..you also need to be sure you’re getting proper amounts of eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)”

The 3rd results from medicalnewstoday.com suggests:

“The raw vegan diet excludes a wide range of foods, so there is a risk that a person may not get all of the vitamins and minerals they need.

A 2019 study reports that the raw vegan diet may not provide enough: Protein, vitamin B12, vitamin D, iron, calcium, selenium, zinc”

No wonder there is a widespread conclusion among many people that a raw vegan diet is sure to lead to deficiency. It is easy to see why even raw vegans can start to become unsure of themselves with this kind of information freely and openly available. The question is whether the

evidence around these claims is particularly reliable or not? Is there much science available to us on the subject?

Before going into that, I would like to start by looking at the concept of deficiency in general as there seems to be a widespread idea that this is a genuine risk to people on many types of diet.

Is deficiency a risk in the modern world?

It is conventional mainstream guidance that should aim to get our nutrition from healthy foods, in particular fruits and vegetables. Supplementation is not recommended as a strategy to act as a safeguard or a back up plan and there is little to no evidence that modern food supplies are anything other than completely adequate in meeting our general nutritional needs (more on this later).

Why then does the fear of deficiency continue and why do people seem to automatically assume that raw vegans may be at more risk of developing a deficiency than other dietary groups?

As much as there are people who will dogmatically avoid all forms of medicine and supplementation there are also people that go the opposite direction. They become a virtual hypochondriac thinking that every time they are tired they are suffering from a deficiency that they must find a supplement for. The idea that they may be tired through stress, overwork, lack of good sleep or many other factors sometimes goes over their head in the search for a supplement that will fix it all.

This mindset has led many people away from a raw vegan diet. They become convinced they are deficient in *something* with no evidence to prove it.

There was at one time a spate of ex raw vegan influencers that moved away from a raw vegan diet in the belief that they were missing something. This list included Yovana Mendoza “Rawvana”, who had amassed a fanbase of 2 million people following her raw vegan diet journey. Alyse Brautigam “Raw Alignment” and Megan Elizabeth are

others that had developed significant numbers of fans following their raw vegan journey.

When one by one they revealed that they were no longer vegan, they all blamed the diet and suggested that there was something missing in the diet. But none ever confirmed what it was that was missing. None ever showed before and after results confirming that the addition of meat had corrected their deficiency. It seemed like all of them suffered from a case of societal pressure to fit in with others. On top of this, they seemed to have some level of fear or paranoia around the idea that they were missing something in their diet.

I believe to be a long term raw vegan one must feel confident about their diet. I think it is important to realise that in contrast to what society may think that it is really other people that are at far more risk of deficiency than those following a raw vegan diet are.

Let's look a little at the history of dietary deficiency and some of the most famous cases of the diseases caused by these deficiencies. Do we find a lot of raw vegans in this history?

Brief History Of Dietary Deficiency

It is likely that people have suffered from dietary deficiency issues throughout history but in reality the main nutrition issue was people not getting enough food in general. Starvation and famine have been a major threat to people throughout history.

Even today it is estimated that around 9 million people die each year from hunger and hunger related diseases (this is around 25,000 people each day). It is also estimated that as recently as 2018, 822 million people were affected by hunger and 113 million are affected by “acute hunger” and are in dire need of food and nutrients.²

²*People Who Died From Hunger This Year*

<https://www.theworldcounts.com/challenges/people-and-poverty/hunger-and-obesity/how-many-people-die-from-hunger-each-year/story>

The study of deficiencies related to micronutrients such as vitamins and minerals is a relatively recent subject. The first vitamin to be isolated was retinol and this was in 1913 and the last one essential for human nutrition, b12, was discovered as late as 1948.³

When deficiency diseases were first observed and investigated there was no intuitive or obvious sense that these diseases were anything to do with diet. It seems that throughout history these diseases have been identified and dietary solutions were found and widely used, only to somehow end up being forgotten about and rediscovered later. Even scurvy continued to happen as late as 1920 in arctic expeditions as the already proven requirement for sailors to take a source of citrus fruit was ignored.⁴

Scurvy

Scurvy seems to be the first deficiency disease that was investigated fully and a solution was found. Famously, scurvy was a disease affecting many sailors on long voyages. The condition was a mystery to the physicians of the time yet there are accounts of scurvy like diseases going back to ancient Egypt⁵. The effectiveness of citrus fruits in curing and preventing scurvy was known to Portuguese sailors in the 15th century.⁶

Throughout the “age of sail” there are estimates of around 2 million sailors dying from scurvy with the issue being so prevalent ship owners made an assumption that 50% of the crew would die on any voyage.⁷

Despite this, Scottish surgeon James Lind is seen as the man that discovered that citrus fruits were a cure for scurvy and he wrote his “*Treatise On The Scurvy*” published in 1753. It still took a further 40 years before the British Navy adopted the practise of making lime juice

³ *Vitamin Deficiency*, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vitamin_deficiency

⁴ *Scott and Scurvy*, https://idlewords.com/2010/03/scott_and_scurvy.htm

⁵ *Scurvy in pediatric age group – A disease often forgotten?* Agarwal et al, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4411344/>

⁶ *Infantile Scurvy: A Historical Perspective*, Rajakumar, <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/108/4/e76.full>

⁷ *The Age Of Scurvy*, <https://www.sciencehistory.org/distillations/magazine/the-age-of-scurvy>

mandatory for its sailors (this gave a strategic advantage to British ships which were able to stay at sea far longer with a healthy crew).

Though most people now are aware of the story of scurvy and that citrus fruits are a good source of vitamin C, it is likely that almost any fresh raw plant foods and even some raw animal products⁸ would have supplied sufficient vitamin C to ward off scurvy.

Vitamin C is particularly vulnerable to degradation in the cooking or preserving process and most of these sailors were living on cured meats and grain based biscuits. On top of this the likelihood is that many were on a poor diet prior to sailing and this would have added to the other conditions making them vulnerable to deficiency.

Here we have one of the most well known cases of dietary deficiency in history and what is clear is that this was not caused by a vegan diet. It was not caused by a raw food diet and certainly not caused by a fruitarian diet. In reality what we see here, and a pattern will emerge soon as you read on, is that this is dietary deficiency caused by a LACK of fruit rather than a fruit diet. Moving away from our natural diet, no matter how small that move is, can be dangerous to our health.

Beri Beri

A second famous dietary deficiency disease that was endemic one time in a population was Beri Beri. Unheard of in the developed world today, beri beri was eventually found to be a deficiency in vitamin B1 also known as Thiamine. It still exists as a problem in some parts of Asia and Africa.

Beriberi can affect the nervous system and lead to numbness in the hands and feet, confusion, and swelling in the legs leading to difficulty walking. The condition was endemic in Japan in the 19th century especially among poorer people. Many lived on a diet of mostly or

⁸ *10 Nutrients That You Can't Get From Animal Foods*, Alti Arnarson, https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/10-nutrients-you-cant-get-from-animal-foods#TOC_TITLE_HDR_2

sometimes entirely polished rice, a processed form of rice that contains little to no thiamine.

A Japanese medical doctor working with the Japanese Navy, Takaki Kanehiro, was first to discover the dietary connection when observing that giving sailors a more varied diet would prevent the disease from occurring.

Once again we see a situation in which a dietary deficiency was caused not by a lack of cooked food or a lack of animal products. Also, it was clearly not a lack of starch that was the issue. What we see once again is a deficiency that would have been cured by fruit. Fruit is an excellent source of thiamine and it is easy for us to get more than enough thiamine on a fruit diet. In fact we could most likely cure Beri Beri with a prescription of “Berries Berries”!

Pellagra

Pellagra is a deficiency in vitamin B3 also known as Niacin. The symptoms of the disease are characterised by the 4 D's: dermatitis, diarrhea, dementia, death⁹. This commonly occurs in areas in which the population is living on corn and was once endemic in Italy and the American south. Between 1906 and 1940 it was estimated that 3 million Americans were affected by pellagra and there were around 100,000 deaths making it an epidemic of the time.

Native populations in South America that had lived on corn as a staple crop for many years had developed a process called “nixtamalization” in which the corn is treated with a solution of lime (the alkali, not the fruit). This helps to make the niacin in corn nutritionally available to humans.

Once again, B3 is easily obtained with the addition of fruit to the diet. The deficiency was not caused by a fruit based raw vegan diet, that is clear.








I point out these 3 historical endemic deficiency diseases to show the general trend in deficiency diseases. These tend to occur when populations have moved away from our natural diet. Often they would be

⁹ *Pellagra: Dermatitis, dementia and diarrhea*, Hegyi et al
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1365-4632.2004.01959.x>

completely reversed by the adoption of a fruit based diet or simply the addition of more fruit to the diet.

But fear of dietary deficiency from these terrible cases from the past have led to a cultural awareness of the concept of deficiency diseases and therefore the mistaken idea that a vegan or raw vegan diet is more at risk of deficiency than a diet containing all of the food groups.

In reality, if we put a typical example of a simple raw vegan diet into cronometer (a commonly used only nutrition tracking app) we find that almost all of our vitamin needs are easily met on a fruit based diet:

Description	Amount	Unit	Energy (kcal)
 Bananas, Raw	7	medium - 7" to 7 7/8" long	735.14
 Grapes, Raw	1000	g	690
 Lettuce, Iceberg	1	medium - head - 6" diameter	75.46
 Oranges, Raw	6	medium - 2 5/8" diameter	369.42
 Tomato, Red, Raw	5	medium - 2 3/5" diameter	110.7
 Avocado, Black Skin	0.5	each	113.56
 Cucumber, Raw, With Peel	1	medium	32.4

In this example, I have added 7 bananas, 1 kg of grapes, 6 oranges and a simple salad of one head of lettuce, one half of an avocado, 5 tomatoes and a cucumber to this daily example of a raw vegan diet.

Here are the vitamin results:

Vitamins		
B1 (Thiamine)	2.2 mg	182%
B2 (Riboflavin)	2.0 mg	157%
B3 (Niacin)	15.4 mg	96%
B5 (Pantothenic Acid)	7.8 mg	156%
B6 (Pyridoxine)	5.4 mg	413%
B12 (Cobalamin)	0.0 µg	0%
Folate	745.2 µg	186%
Vitamin A	11112.6 IU	370%
Vitamin C	633.4 mg	704%
Vitamin D	0.0 IU	0%
Vitamin E	12.7 mg	85%
Vitamin K	378.3 µg	315%

As we can see we are easily meeting our needs on this diet for all vitamins apart from the two that we generally do not get from our food.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is famously known to be an essential vitamin that we receive our main source of not from food but from the action of sunlight on our skin. In countries that do not have a year round supply of sunlight, such as in northern Europe, many people regardless of diet can test as being low in vitamin D. In extreme cases, Vitamin D deficiency led to rickets, but this was more of a problem in an era in which children were working indoors all day in factories with no exposure to the sunlight and the smog from factory chimneys added an extra barrier to receiving sunlight.

The NHS in the UK states that from March to September most people can get adequate vitamin D from the sunlight but from October to March we do not make enough. Although it can be received from our diet, this is a poorer and less reliable source than sunlight and supplementation is suggested as something that should be considered. They have an across the board recommendation that children from 0 - 4 should be given Vitamin D supplementation (regardless of diet).¹⁰

¹⁰Vitamin D, nhs.uk, <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d/>

Despite the common misconception, Vitamin D deficiency is not seen as a vegan or raw vegan issue and may be a concern for people across the dietary spectrum. Certainly it is not caused by a fruit based raw vegan diet.

One study on raw vegans actually showed that they tended to have higher levels of vitamin D than the average member of the population. The study states:

“In our RF [raw vegan] group, serum 25-hydroxyvitamin D concentrations were markedly higher than in the control group. Dietary intake of 25-hydroxyvitamin D was extremely low in the RF group, and therefore their high serum values can be explained in part by a greater exposure to sunlight. Indeed, questioning of our RF subjects revealed that they generally made an effort to spend time in the sun, including sunbathing.”¹¹

The fact that the raw vegans tended to be at a healthier weight also made it easier for the body to pick up vitamin D from the sun. This is just one small piece of evidence but certainly worth our attention.

Vitamin B12

The 2 questions that every vegan gets commonly are “where do you get your protein?” and “where do you get your b12?”. For those who are anti-vegan the b12 issue is the achilles heel in the vegan lifestyle, proving that a vegan diet is not “natural” or healthy.

B12 is different to other vitamins in that it is not made in plants. In fact it is made by bacteria and is essentially the waste product of these bacteria (microscopic microbes that cover the planet). Herbivores produce their own B12 by having enough B12 producing bacteria in their gut from which they can absorb what they require. Primates are said to get a source of B12 through eating their own faeces.

¹¹ *Low Bone Mass in Subjects on a Long-term Raw Vegetarian Diet*, Fontana et al, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/486478>

Generally, it is claimed that this method of b12 production is not available in humans. We have b12 producing bacteria in our guts (and b12 in our faeces) but it is said to be produced in the colon, which is beyond our small intestine (where most of our nutrition is absorbed).

A study on Indian subjects from 1980 suggested that b12 may be produced in the small intestine and could be absorbed there. This study was investigating why no b12 deficiency was found in an entirely vegetarian population in one part of India. Theoretically the requirement of additional b12 in the diet would be unnecessary if we could produce our own. The study, published in a 1980 copy of *Nature*, suggested that:

“at least two groups of organisms in the small bowel, *Pseudomonas* and *Klebsiella* may synthesise significant amounts of the vitamin.”¹²

The same group of researchers had earlier found that intrinsic factor was present in the small intestine which would theoretically allow for the absorption of b12 from any b12 producing bacteria that lived in the small intestine.¹³

However, it was later suggested that faecal contamination of the water supplies may have been an important source of the nutrient in the studied population rather than absorption from gut flora.¹⁴

It is quite clear that mainstream guidance for vegans is that B12 supplementation is virtually essential. Dr Michael Greger the founder of NutritionFacts.org and a well respected source of nutrition information for vegans says clearly that B12 supplementation is MANDATORY for vegans.

B12 is commonly fortified into vegan products (though it is also fortified into products designed for the general population). Most vegan

¹² *Vitamin B12 synthesis by human small intestinal bacteria*, MJ Albert et al, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/7354869/>

¹³ *Free intrinsic factor in the intestine in man*, V. I Mathan et al, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/1261761/>

¹⁴ <https://www.insaindia.res.in/detail.php?id=N90-1052>

organisations and vegan information sources will recommend B12 supplementation as a general rule for all vegans.

This advice comes from many studies showing again and again that vegans tend to test lower for b12 than lacto-vegetarians and omnivores and are more likely to test as being clinically deficient levels.

Though the results in these studies are consistent, these studies almost never suggest that the vegans in these studies were suffering from chronic b12 deficiency symptoms or mention that their b12 levels were having a major impact on their health.

Many of those who strongly advocate for mandatory b12 supplementation will bring up case studies and individual reports of extreme ill health and damage caused by b12 deficiency. These cases can be severe, and cases in children can lead to long term neurological damage. However, without knowing all of the factors involved in these cases it is not necessarily the case that this level of risk applies across the board to all vegans.

Awareness is certainly required about the issue and no one should be dogmatic in avoiding supplementation if necessary but at the same time new vegans and people considering a vegan diet can become overly anxious about the risk of b12 deficiency when there is a simple solution for those who wish to reduce their risk entirely.

As far as case studies go, I can also think of numerous people who have not supplemented for b12 on a vegan diet for many years. Some have not supplemented in decades on a vegan diet and do not report signs or symptoms or deficiency. Others developed symptoms many years into going vegan and easily dealt with the issue through supplementation.

Personally, I have been a vegan since September 2011 and have yet to take a b12 supplement. In most of that time I have lived almost entirely on raw vegan whole foods like fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds with rare use of nutritional yeast being the only food I can think of that may have b12 fortified in it. I am not dogmatic about this and do not advocate

it to you but I would suggest that there is no need to develop fear or anxiety around the b12 issue.

Evidence For Deficiency In Raw Vegans Scientific Research On Raw Vegan Diets - Raw Vegans And b12

Back around 2005 some research took place in Germany, led by Dr Corrina Koebnick and her team. One of the studies focused on raw food diets and b12. The study looked at the b12 and Homocysteine levels of a group of people that adhered to some version of a raw food diet.

The problem with this study is that very few people actually followed a raw vegan diet. Only 21% said they followed a vegan diet, and it appears that very few, if any, followed a 100% raw diet. Most defined themselves as eating 90% + raw food.¹⁵

The study found that 38% of the subjects were b12 deficient. It also suggested that b12 levels were lower in those with less foods of animal origin.

You can read this study here:

<https://academic.oup.com/jn/article/135/10/2372/4669843>

Whether this study applies accurately to raw vegans or not, the conclusion has been backed by other studies of raw foodists.

The Hallelujah Acres group was a religious group that promoted a raw food diet. They did a study in which they hoped to show that vegans following a raw food diet may not require b12 supplementation. However the study showed that 47% showed abnormal MMA concentrations (a marker for b12 status). The conclusion was that people following strictly a raw food diet should monitor b12 levels.¹⁶

You can find this study here: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11146329/>

¹⁵ *Long-Term Consumption of a Raw Food Diet Is Associated with Favorable Serum LDL Cholesterol and Triglycerides but Also with Elevated Plasma Homocysteine and Low Serum HDL Cholesterol in Humans*, Koebnick et al, <https://academic.oup.com/jn/article/135/10/2372/4669843>

¹⁶ *Metabolic vitamin B12 status on a mostly raw vegan diet with follow-up using tablets, nutritional yeast, or probiotic supplements*, Donaldson, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11146329/>

Raw Vegan Science - Vitamin D

In a study focusing on bone density, it was found that the raw vegetarian food group had on average a lower body mass and lower bone density than a control group of people on a standard American diet (the study confirms that lower body mass relates to lower bone density). However, an interesting discovery from this study that was not focused upon was that the raw vegan group had a higher vitamin D concentration as I have already mentioned above.¹⁷

This evidence goes against the idea of raw vegans being vitamin D deficient due to their diet.

Raw Vegan Science - Vegan Iron Man Case Report

This case report followed a 48 year old man who had been raw vegan for 6 years. He had competed in an Iron Man event. The report suggests that the man showed no signs of dietary deficiency or impaired health.¹⁸ Though only an individual case report, it is another piece of evidence against the idea that raw vegans show signs of dietary deficiency; however the study did not disclose if this man used supplements.

You can read this study here:

<https://www.hindawi.com/journals/cric/2014/317246/>

Raw Food Science - Review Of Literature

In 2002 a review of the literature gave this overall picture of nutrition when looking at a number of studies on the raw food diet:

“As compared to mean nutrient intakes of people in the United States, as reported in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey

¹⁷ *Low Bone Mass in Subjects on a Long-term Raw Vegetarian Diet*, Fontana et al, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/486478>

¹⁸ *Vegan Triple-Ironman (Raw Vegetables/Fruits)*, Leischik and Spelsberg, <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/cric/2014/317246/>

(NHANES III), intakes of several nutrients were significantly higher in subjects eating a raw foods diet, and intakes of several nutrients were lower. Intakes of fiber, vitamins A, B6, C, and E, folate, copper, and potassium were significantly higher in subjects eating a raw foods diet as compared with those reported in NHANES III, and intakes of protein, total and saturated fat, cholesterol, vitamin B12, phosphorus, sodium, and zinc were significantly lower.”¹⁹

The suggestion therefore is mixed. There is no general conclusion that a raw food diet makes people deficient in any particular nutrient and in fact it may be far superior to the standard diet in providing key nutrients.

Read the study here:

https://www.vrg.org/journal/vj2002issue4/2002_issue4_rawfoodsdiets.php

The Raw Food Diet And Vitamin A

This study looked at the Vitamin A status of people on a raw food diet. The conclusion was that 82% had Vitamin A within the normal range and 63% were in a range associated with the prevention of chronic disease.²⁰ Some people have claimed in the past that there is no vegan source of Vitamin A. But clearly the beta carotene in the raw food diet is adequate to allow the body to create enough Vitamin A.

Read the study here: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/18028575/>

Personal Experiences

From my own experience, I have yet to see a major pattern emerge of wide scale deficiency within the raw vegan community. Of course, I could be biased about that, but this is my opinion as of now.

¹⁹ *Raw Food Diets*, Suzanne Havala Hobbs, https://www.vrg.org/journal/vj2002issue4/2002_issue4_rawfoodsdiets.php

²⁰ *Long-term strict raw food diet is associated with favourable plasma beta-carotene and low plasma lycopene concentrations in Germans*, Garcia et al, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/18028575/>

I have certainly heard people that claimed to be b12 deficient at times though many were self diagnosed (an unreliable source of information). I have also heard of a case of Vitamin D deficiency seemingly leading to a diagnosis of osteoporosis in a long term raw vegan.

This was subsequently fixed with exercise and supplementation. In this situation, the person seemed to be taking great care to stay out of direct sunlight (potentially due to prior skin damage) and lived in Northern Europe long term. As we have seen from above, Vitamin D deficiency is not a general pattern in raw vegans.

Conclusion

Overall my opinion on deficiency among raw vegans is that this is not something that is automatic or a major topic of concern. There are far more concerns surrounding the standard western diet particularly the role it plays in creating major chronic disease in people. There is no general need for raw vegans to take multivitamins or general supplement products.

There are some areas of concern that are not solely vegan including vitamin D in people that live in countries where sunlight is less common, though some research suggests this is less of a concern to raw vegans than people in the general population. Vitamin B12 is a concern for vegans and something to be aware of but also something with an easy and simple solution. As always, if you believe yourself to be deficient in any nutrient it is best to talk this over and receive clinical testing from your doctor.

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2. The “Raw vegans have no need for medication” Myth

It is no wonder that people turn a sceptical eye towards the medical industry. Talk to a roomful of people at a conference or event around alternative health ideas and you will quickly realise why many of them have turned away from conventional medicine.

So many people have had bad experiences with the conventional medicine path. People can be misdiagnosed and prescribed the wrong medication. They can be given treatments that do not work for them or cause problems. At the worst of course, a person can receive poor care that leads either to severe injury, life long disability or death.

According to the British Medical Journal, in the year 2018-19 the National Health Service in the UK paid £2.4bn (€2.8bn; \$3.1bn) towards clinical negligence claims in 2018-19 (This sum equates to about 2% of the entire budget for the NHS in England)²¹. A high proportion of this amount paid out (approximately 50%) were paid to the families of children harmed during birth.

A report published in the British Medical Journal stated the following for the USA in 2010:

“The costs associated with medical liability—including legal costs and payouts associated with medical malpractice cases, malpractice insurance, and the practice of defensive medicine—total \$55.6bn (£36.2bn; €43.6bn) a year or 2.4% of annual healthcare spending in the United States”²²

A study from John Hopkins University led to the popular, though probably not entirely accurate, idea that the 3rd leading cause of death

²¹ *Clinical negligence costs: taking action to safeguard NHS sustainability*, Wai Hung Yao et al
<https://www.bmj.com/content/368/bmj.m552>

²² *Annual cost of medical liability in US is \$56bn, study estimates*, Bob Roehr,
<https://www.bmj.com/content/341/bmj.c4905>

in the US was “medical error”.²³ The numbers from this study suggest that 250,000 people die each year in the US from medical error.

Critics of this study have pointed out that this would mean that between one third and one half of all hospital deaths would come from medical error. Even the biggest critic of conventional medicine would have to concede it would be hard to believe this is accurate (and no one noticed until now).

At the very least, this information gives a sense of the amount of people that have been mistreated or injured within the care of conventional medicine. Many people have personal accounts of being told by a doctor that their disease was incurable and that there was no other treatment. Some have been able to discover that a simple change to their diet was all that was required for the symptoms of their condition to alleviate.

All of this adds to a fear that is fairly common within all humans. Humans tend to have a bias against that which appears man made and therefore “unnatural”, while having a more positive perspective on that which is “natural”.

The appeal to nature fallacy, as it is known, has an incredibly powerful influence on human behaviour. In simple terms it goes like this:

That which is natural is good and automatically better than that which is unnatural.

This powerful concept is incredibly influential to humans. It leads to all manner of products and businesses being marketed as a “natural” solution or product. (No one has been able to explain to me yet how any toothpaste, for example, can be called “natural” but it does not stop people recommending them to me on this basis).

²³ *Medical error-the third leading cause of death in the US*, Martin A Makary, Michael Daniel, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27143499/>

Within healthcare, there is no wonder that people feel a desire to find a “natural” solution or alternative. It is also easy for people to feel cynical towards the large corporations that profit from the medical industry.

There is also a strong feeling in many people that once in the far distant past we lived in a natural utopia in which all people lived in peace and harmony with nature and disease and illness did not exist. There is a suspicion that the greed of the modern world has led to the downfall of humanity and the creation of stress, depression and disease.

There may be some truth to this idea, just as there may be truth to the idea that there are better or more effective “natural” treatments on some occasions not offered by the conventional medical system. But treating this as a dogma to be followed all the time is not an intelligent way to make decisions in life.

Part of the reason that we can fall for these simple concepts is that they give a false idea of certainty and give us an easy black and white model to make choices. The truth is that the problems that we face in life are far more complex than we sometimes want to accept. The solutions may also be far more complex to assume that we can simply ask “what is the natural approach?” expecting it to be the best, is highly unwise.

When we apply this to our own personal health, we start to realise that having a blanket rule to avoid medications or the medical industry entirely in all situations is dangerous to your health.

This is something that all people in the natural health community and all raw food and raw vegan advocates must understand. Yet, many put themselves at the risk of huge harm by developing the dogmatic viewpoint that they never need the help of modern medicine.

Raw vegans can sometimes develop a sense that they are almost invincible to harm. They have learned simplistic ideas such as “all illness is caused by mucus” or “all illness starts in the gut” or even that “illness comes from toxins, avoiding toxic chemicals will protect you from all disease”. Therefore they assume that they are virtually invincible to

illness if they stick to their pure diet and a lifestyle avoiding man made chemicals.

Often, they have picked up ideas from writers from the past. Many of these people were able to cure their own personal health issues with a raw vegan diet and went on to help others. Perhaps because of their enthusiasm or their desire to promote their idea strongly they promoted unrealistic and often unfounded ideas around human health. They may have been entirely sincere in what they were saying, as many raw vegans of today are when repeating these ideas, but that does not mean to say they were right.

Of course, there is some truth that those following a raw vegan diet will in many situations avoid or greatly lessen the risk of developing many of the modern diseases. In some ways we could even say that public health measures and advances in modern medicine have been so successful that most people now come to harm due to lifestyle related diseases rather than any other threat.

The most common contributory factors to death including heart disease, stroke, cancer, high blood pressure and obesity are all related to poor diet. Many of the autoimmune conditions that people suffer are also commonly contributed or in some instances caused by poor diet. It is not hard also to understand that the huge numbers of digestive troubles people go through are also related to, if not entirely caused by poor diet.

It seems clear that the modern medical establishment has not yet taken this idea seriously. The following picture, for example, comes from a US hospital that has a McDonalds within it's building (hardly a commitment to taken lifestyle risks to health seriously):



No wonder then, that we would be sceptical to take any of their advice.

Diet is the solution when diet is the cause

It is clear that in situations in which your health issues are being CAUSED by your poor diet that the solution to this is to remove the cause. In other words, changing your diet is the most powerful and best solution for diet related conditions. In fact it is truly the ONLY solution and every other option is futile.

But this only applies for conditions that are entirely or mostly caused by poor diet. Though this accounts for a huge number of modern day diseases, this is not the whole story.

When making intelligent choices about our health, we must try to assess what is the cause of the health issue we are going through. If the cause is not diet related, we can not assume that our diet alone will protect us. We must look deeper than this and consider the risks of the various

solutions we can take (and also the risk in not taking any solution) which will often include having a serious conversation with our doctor or relevant medical practitioner.

Raw vegans can not and should not DIAGNOSE THEMSELVES

A poor practice going along with this is the highly inaccurate strategy of self diagnosis. This is also common in the raw vegan community. Go to any raw vegan forum and follow the conversation for a few weeks and you are bound to find many people claiming to have had all kinds of conditions. Many people will then provide their supposed solutions to these issues including supplementation, fasting or long term juice only diets.

Many times I have simply asked these people: “who diagnosed your condition?”. Often they either have no reply or they were diagnosed by an unlicensed practitioner with no authority to diagnose medical conditions. Many people within these forums also rush to provide a diagnosis without having ever met the person or having any access to their medical history or background. This is highly irresponsible, potentially illegal but importantly very likely to be highly inaccurate.

I always suggest that people seek professional diagnosis if they believe something serious is going on. Without knowing what the problem truly is, it is hard to assess what to do to solve the problem.

Avoiding medical opinion and treatment at all costs is a dangerous dogma that has led to the unnecessary death of many people in the natural health world. Here are just a few examples.

Michael Gearin- Tosh

Michael Gearin-Tosh was an author and academic that achieved high status and acclaim in his career. But he became well known later in his life through his journey with cancer and a book he published on his experiences. In 1994 he was diagnosed with bone marrow cancer and given just months to live he chose not to take chemotherapy treatment.

He chose to investigate other approaches to taking care of his health and followed the Gerson Therapy. This is a treatment in which a person essentially sticks to a raw vegan diet with the addition of some other practises such as coffee enemas (a bizarre way to flood your system with caffeine and something I suggest you avoid entirely). Whether he was lucky or the therapy worked is unclear but he survived a further 11 years and died in 2005. What killed him? Not cancer.

It turns out that he passed away due to a blood infection. My friend, who is also a cancer survivor, told me that the reason for the blood infection was that Michael had refused to take antibiotics in response to an infection in his tooth. Routinely, infections can be dealt with quickly with antibiotics, but many people in the natural health world can come to great harm by assuming they can go without using these.

We forget that prior to antibiotics, many people died from infection and there was no treatment that worked. Even simple situations like a person getting a cut from a rosebush could lead to serious and life threatening infections. This leads to the next story rather conveniently.

Dr Robert Lockhart

Dr Robert Lockhart's death in 2019 was a shock to everyone that knew him in the raw vegan world. Looking further into the story, sadly it seems like his death was potentially preventable. Robert had experienced health challenges at a young age and had become a vegetarian and later a raw vegan which he remained for the last 30+ years of his life.

After his death, his family reported in a long public message that his death had come from Robert developing a chest infection in connection with a tropical bacteria called *melioidosis*. Robert had a garden that he tended and it makes sense that he could have picked this up.

Instead of heading to the hospital Robert decided to perform a dry fast (a period of time of no food and no water). When the body is already struggling with an infection, to dehydrate the body is not a wise act.

Robert had started practising dry fasting 5 years prior. The doctors believed that the damage seen on his kidneys may have been in connection to this practise.

He eventually did get to the hospital and remained alive for a few more weeks but suffered two large heart attacks that took his life. When the kidneys are already compromised, it is a struggle to keep electrolytes balanced which affects the heart. You can read the whole report here: <https://fruitfest.co.uk/a-tribute-to-dr-robert-lockhart/>

Whether the death was entirely preventable is up for debate. But if quicker action had been taken, and medical care had immediately been taken, there is a chance Robert would still be with us now.

Dr David Klein

Dr David Klein was a long term raw vegan and a major contributor to the movement. At age 26 he was able to heal his “incurable” colitis through a raw vegan diet. He later went on to write the well known book “*Self Healing Colitis and Crohns*” which has helped many thousands of people achieve their own healing. He created the most successful raw food magazine in the world at the time “*Living Nutrition*” which later turned into “*Vibrance*” magazine and ran successful festivals and seminars around the USA.

Unknown to many people, David had been living in poor health for a number of years up to his death at approximately 60 years old. The cause of his poor health is a little different than the other stories mentioned as David did not necessarily avoid medical treatment.

In fact, he was looking for a natural alternative to clearing the flea infestation from his house. He decided to use a product called “diatomaceous earth”. This is technically a “natural” product but happens to be very dangerous to use. It seems that perhaps the desire to use something “natural” which perhaps he assumed would be less harmful led him to make a decision that ended up damaging his health for the rest of his life.

An article on diatomaceous earth warns:

“The component assessment of these diatomaceous earth insecticides reveals that most of them are composed entirely of amorphous silicon dioxide and consequently are harmful to human health by inhalation”²⁴

The article continues:

“inhaled particles accumulate in the bronchi, pulmonary alveoli, lung tissue, and lymph nodes and are not eliminated from the body. The repeated use of diatomaceous earth insecticides is responsible for many diseases, including silicosis, lung cancer, nonmalignant respiratory diseases and ultimately death”

Was David aware of these risks when he chose to use the substance? Years later the damage caused by the substance was still affecting his lungs leading to a procedure that turned to pneumonia which he was unable to overcome.

More on this story can be read here:

<https://www.facebook.com/FruitPowered/photos/the-world-has-lost-a-powerful-force-and-ive-lost-a-hero-and-friend-dr-david-klei/3536351863042128/>

These are just three of many stories and it is likely that there are many more. These are people that seemingly were taking their health very seriously. But making one mistake or one error of judgement can lead to grave consequences. We are much more fragile than we realise in this life. The raw vegan diet does not make you invincible and following it does not mean you can ignore the advice of the medical industry.

²⁴ *Harmful Effects of Bed Bug-Killing Method of Diatomaceous Earth on Human Health*, Akhoundi et al, <https://academic.oup.com/jinsectscience/article/19/5/13/5586712?fbclid=IwAR3SLEztwis2v8svyoWu8CqJTBSs-YoxyWljFQvMDsza9RbGFDId6YzdBz4>

Conclusion

There are many chronic diseases that seem to be almost entirely caused by a poor diet and other lifestyle choices. When people are suffering from these diseases, the appropriate solution is a drastic change to their diet. But we should not assume that changing your diet works for every health issue. Raw vegans should not avoid medication and medical solutions in times when they are proven to work quickly and effectively.

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3.The Soil Depletion Myth

Do a quick survey of people in the raw vegan community about the topic of soil depletion and you are likely to hear many of them confidently agree that soil depletion is a major problem worldwide. A number of people may suggest this is why they can not succeed on a raw vegan diet as the produce is just not nutrient dense enough anymore due to a lack of good soil.

For some raw food teachers this is a reason to advocate that people should grow their own food, uproot their life and go to live in an area where they can buy from local farmers or take huge quantities of supplements, green powders or “superfoods”.

The idea that the soil that we grow our food in has become depleted of essential minerals is a widespread narrative in modern society that goes along with a general mistrust of the agricultural industry and large industry in general.

Environmental campaigners and the conspiracy style videos they create share scary and panic inducing information about this crisis. I have occasionally heard the statistic that up to 70% of the soil has been depleted and if we are not careful it will all disappear within 30 years.

How much evidence is there of this? It seems like there is certainly good evidence towards soil degradation issues world wide that human beings are responsible for. Before we go into that, let us first ask what exactly is soil degradation (the correct term).

Soil Degradation

The Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations defines soil degradation as:

“a change in the soil health status resulting in a diminished capacity of the ecosystem to provide goods and services for its beneficiaries”²⁵

This process can occur naturally and is a normal part of the change and evolution of an environment. Deserts have formed that were once lush green areas for example. While mountainous areas have become entirely covered in rock with no soil at all.

What we are concerned about is that aspect of soil degradation which is man made.

Maria Helena-Semedo is the Deputy Director General of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO). Her background is in economics having worked in banking. She made an often quoted claim that if the current rates of soil degradation continue, all of the world's top soil could be gone in 60 years.²⁶

This kind of claim gains major attention around the world and has been repeated many times over in the media. But is there any truth to this? It appears that there is no evidence to support this claim whatsoever.

A number of researchers tried to verify where these claims came from and whether they were true. In an article from the website OurWorldInData.com, the author asserts:

“The stark claim that the world has only 100; 60 or even 30 years of harvests left often hits the headlines. Although they continue to be repeated, there is no scientific basis to them.”²⁷

The following graph is used to illustrate the lifespan of soils around the world. Even in the “Bare Soils”, soils kept bare for the very purpose of assessing erosion rates among soils lacking vegetation, we see that only 34% had a life span less than 100 years. The blue conventionally managed line shows a scenario in soils in which no conservation efforts

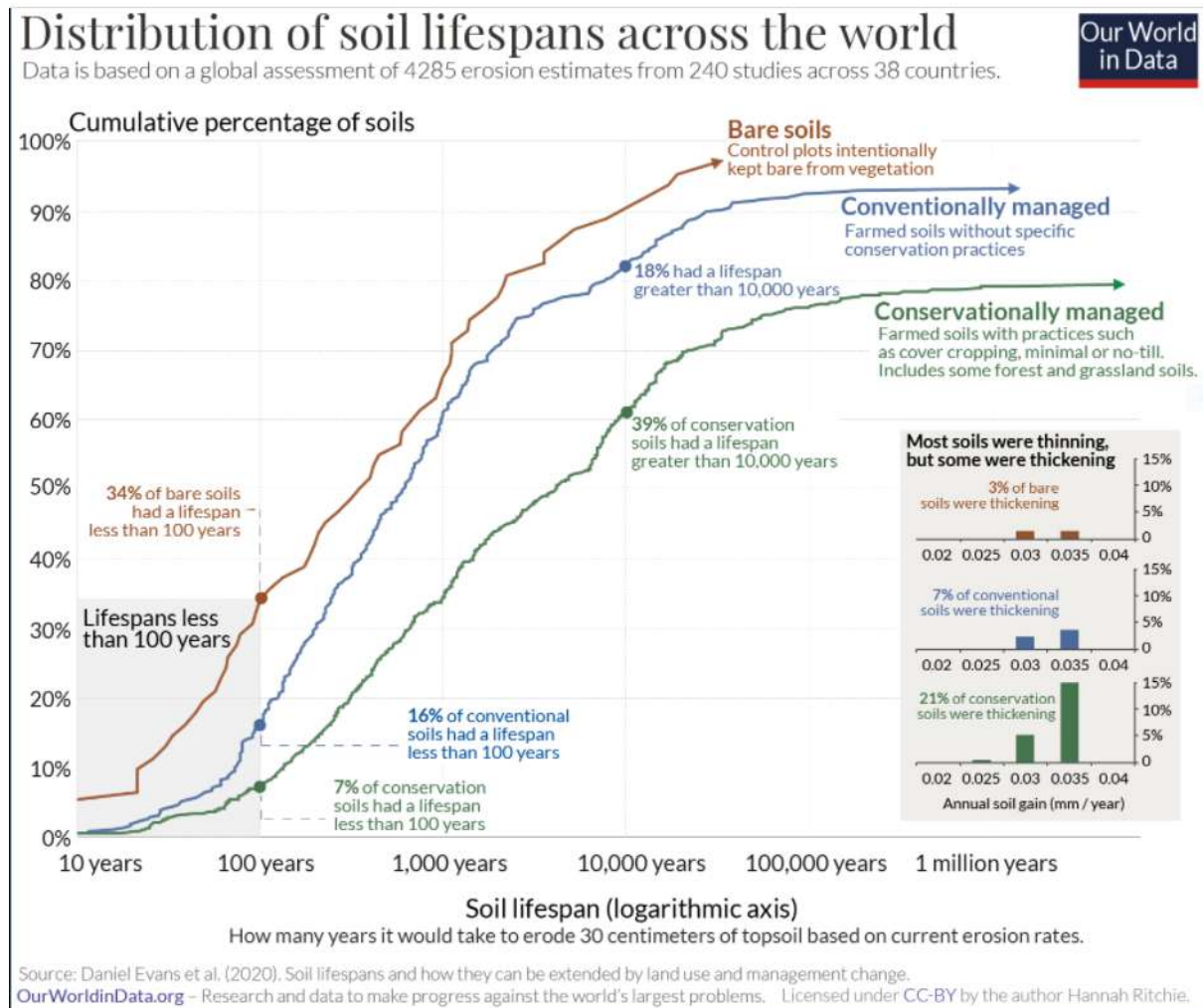
²⁵ *Soil Degradation*, FAO, <http://www.fao.org/soils-portal/soil-degradation-restoration/en/>

²⁶ *Only 60 Years Of Farming Left If Soil Degradation Continues*, Chris Arsenault, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/only-60-years-of-farming-left-if-soil-degradation-continues/>

²⁷ *Do we only have 60 harvests left?*, Hannah Ritchie, <https://ourworldindata.org/soil-lifespans>

are made at all. In that scenario we still see only 16% had a lifespan less than 100 years and 18% had a lifespan greater than 10,000 years.

On land with the use of conservation techniques we see as much as 39% has a lifespan greater than 10,000 years.



An article from New Scientist agrees that there is no evidence to the claim that there is only 60 years of top soil left. It begins:

“When it comes to science reporting, there are some headlines that are so frequently repeated, so intuitively plausible, so closely aligned to our cultural beliefs, that they can seem like incontrovertible truths.”²⁸

²⁸ *The idea that there are only 100 harvests left is just a fantasy*, James Wong
<https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg24232291-100-the-idea-that-there-are-only-100-harvests-left-is-just-a-fantasy/#ixzz77qhxAWyC>

This statement wonderfully illustrates the problem. For some reason, the soil depletion concept sounds like it could be right. We do not immediately throw it out as being unlikely. It seems to go along hand in hand with our distrust of large institutions, industries, corporations and governments and our feeling that we are rapidly accelerating away from the safety and wisdom of the ancient world and damaging the earth in the process.

The author goes on to state that despite the dozens of articles in the press asserting this doomsday scenario that there is only one study that is ever cited to back up these claims. This study compared the soil in gardens in Sheffield, England to nearby agricultural soil (hardly a study that could be used to accurately assess the lifespan of soil worldwide). He points out that this study does not have any mention of a 100 or 60 years lifespan of soil whatsoever.

Not only that, but any such calculation would be hard to calculate accurately according to his conversations with 6 of the world's top soil scientists. Interestingly enough, the article ends with an interesting claim that often goes against the common view point:

“while agriculture may be one of the factors driving erosion and nutrient depletion, many modern farming practices such as no-till and synthetic fertiliser applications may actually be helping alleviate (rather than drive) this. In fact, according to many objective measures, modern, evidence-based farming techniques are more sustainable than those of an idealised past.”

Is soil erosion and soil degradation occurring worldwide? Yes, and it is certainly the case that man made interventions are a cause in a number of ways. Is this erosion happening at such a pace that topsoil is becoming depleted rapidly? The answer appears to be no and modern conservation efforts are already in place to reverse the tide in the opposite direction.

The Nutrient Content Of The Soil

Even if this is the case, how does this affect the nutrient content of the soil, which is a slightly separate issue. What we are really trying to get to here is whether claims that the soil is depleted of nutrients is true.

Furthermore, if this depletion is occurring, is this affecting the quality of modern produce and therefore damaging human health? Does this put us at serious risk of nutrient deficiency as has often been claimed by experts in natural and alternative health circles?

I have heard the claim from educators that science is absolutely solid on this fact. They teach people to distrust the quality of the food around them and ensure that they are receiving enough nutrition through the addition of a supplement product. What is the truth around these claims?

Does our food have less nutrition than the past?

To take a step back let's see what is being claimed. Firstly there is the claim that soil degradation happens. This is absolutely correct. It does occur around the world for many reasons and it is a problem, for which conservation efforts are already in place.

Secondly, it is suggested that this erosion is being caused by the action or omission of farmers. The truth is that poor land management by farmers can be the cause of soil degradation but this is not the only cause and it is a far more complex matter.

As we have seen, the claims that topsoil eradication could occur in 60 years have no evidence and in reality the evidence is showing that modern conservation efforts are already leading to a scenario in which even at the current rate much of today's soil has a lifespan over 10,000 years.

But at this point the claim takes a jump. Due to soil depletion worldwide our farmers are growing crops in soils that are stripped of nutrients and

this has a knock on effect to the quantity of nutrients within modern crops.

A further jump is then made to suggest that this reduction in nutrients due to soil depletion is a cause of nutritional deficiency in modern humans. Some suggest this is the main reason for health challenges today.

This is a chain of 3 or 4 separate claims that must all be backed with evidence in order to hold weight. Does any evidence for any part of these claims exist? If this is the current state of things my question would be why is noone doing anything about this?

Investigating The Science Of Declining Nutrients Content In Food

An article from ScienceDirect.com shares a great deal of light and wisdom on this topic. In this article, Robin J Marles a Senior Scientific Advisor to Health Canada looks at the evidence around much of these claims. The article is entitled *“Mineral nutrient composition of vegetables, fruits and grains: The context of reports of apparent historical declines”*.

If you are a believer in the soil depletion theory you can certainly find some studies that show evidence that the levels of certain minerals in commonly grown fruits and vegetables crops are lower now than they were in the past. Data has been kept that has recorded the nutritional composition of crops going back to at least the 1950s. Compare tables from the past to those of today and we can see a decline in certain minerals. Does this tell the whole story and prove that soil depletion is the cause?

As with so many things, the truth is more complicated than that. The article points out:

“while the original source of information, USDA food composition tables, is authoritative, a direct comparison of the values does not take into consideration differences in crop varieties or methods of nutrient

analysis, and provides no information on potential causes of reported differences.”²⁹

Several peer reviewed scientific studies have looked further into this issue. When the data from the past is compared to that of today there are trends that some nutrient levels have decreased in a number of foods. However, there was also evidence that some nutrient levels had increased making it hard to prove that these results were caused by a widespread soil depletion issue.

In each case, none of these studies suggested that soil depletion or the quality of the soil was the cause of the apparent declines in mineral levels. In fact, in many of these studies they had used completely different varieties of produce and even had used produce from different parts of the world. Hardly an accurate comparison.

More credence was given to the idea that new modern varieties bred for larger yield, and higher levels of carbohydrate and water content had a natural dilution effect on the quantity of minerals reported.

At the same time, none of these studies suggested that any apparent declines were a concern for human nutrition as these deviations were relatively small and were in line with normal levels of deviation in mineral content. Not one study suggested any concern regarding these apparent declines being connected with causing deficiency in the modern diet in fact they suggest that we will still get the nutrition we need from modern produce.

Personally I found this article very persuasive and to some degree it puts to bed the soil depletion myth as it stands. You can read it all here: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0889157516302113#!>

If the evidence around this idea is so poor, why does this myth continue to circulate?

²⁹ *Mineral nutrient composition of vegetables, fruits and grains: The context of reports of apparent historical declines*, Robin J Marles, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0889157516302113#!>

Once again it comes down to being something that seems to go along with our intuitive beliefs and the appeal to nature fallacy. The idea that our modern farming methods have destroyed the food we eat is somehow very easy to swallow (especially for a modern population of people that are completely disconnected from seeing where our food comes from). It is also convenient to blame someone else for our health issues than realise that perhaps it is our own choices that are to blame.

But the real reason that the myth has persisted is that it helps to sell billions and billions of dollars worth of products worldwide. In order to sell a product, especially in the alternative health space, marketers set about creating a problem and getting the public into a panic around it. They then supply the solution in the form of a pill, powder or potion that conveniently can be sold at a high margin to allow for huge profits that more than cover the costs of the marketing that pushes the idea out to the masses.

People are often duped by marketing films that masquerade as conspiracy theory documentaries exposing the truth about how the world really works. These films are entirely designed to manipulate people and put them in a position to buy the products that they provide as the solution.

The “Soil Depletion” Story

This is not new. This tactic has been used for at least one hundred years. The “soil depletion” story has been used over and over by millions of marketers and salespeople to scare people into buying supplement products instead of relying on the fruits and vegetables that truly support our health.

The spread of these lies was seen as enough of a problem by the USDA in the 1960s that they published a film alerting the public to this practise. You can watch this film “*The Health Fraud Racket*” on youtube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDsBBGG0Lhl>

There is a funny clip here in which an actor plays a lecturer making the same claims that are still being made to this day and still work - “the soil is stripped of nutrients, we can’t trust modern food, we must supplement to make sure we get enough” etc etc.

Conclusion

Evidence that soil depletion is a universal reality is unfounded. On top of this, evidence that apparent soil depletion has led to a decline in the nutrient content of modern foods does not exist. Evidence that this chain of events leads to dietary deficiencies in modern humans also can not be found.

This concept is truly a myth that must stop being spread now by responsible health educators. Leave this scaremongering to the supplement industry. Let us agree with the major scientific consensus. We should get our nutrition from food and the modern food supply is adequate in providing us with that nutrition.

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4. The “Raw Vegans Must Take Supplements” Myth

For argument’s sake, let us say that our modern food supply is depleted of nutrition. If this is true, does that mean that we should take supplements or multivitamin type products in order to boost our nutrient consumption to sufficient levels?

If this is the case we should find widespread support of the idea. After all, the medical industry is happy to prescribe people with a health solution in the form of a pill and the pharmaceutical companies are happy to manufacture and supply these products.

What we find is that there is very little evidence to support the consumption of supplement or multivitamin products for any reason. The mainstream medical establishment is not in favour of recommending supplements and there is not only a lack of support but there is concern about the potential adverse impacts that nutritional supplement products can have on human health. Surely, there would be no reason for them not to support the use of supplements if they believed them to be effective?

What we mostly see in the mainstream is support for getting our nutrition from our food. The American Dietetic Association states:

“It is the position of the American Dietetic Association that the best nutrition-based strategy for promoting optimal health and reducing the risk of chronic disease is to wisely choose a wide variety of nutrient-rich foods.”³⁰

They do go on to say that in some cases, and with the advice of a professional, additional supplementation may help with meeting nutrition needs. It is clear that there is no broad spectrum support for the idea that everyone must be supplementing or should be taking a multivitamin.

³⁰*Position of the American Dietetic Association: nutrient supplementation*, Melissa Ventura Marra, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19957415/>

The American Medical Association has raised concern about the lack of regulation in the Nutritional Supplement industry. They have pointed out that while regular pharmaceuticals go through rigorous testing before being made available to the public that this has not been the case with supplements. They are strongly advocating for tighter regulation of the industry to protect public health.³¹

Within the UK, these opinions are largely the same. The NHS states clearly that in general people do not need to take supplements and should instead get their nutrition from a healthy diet. However, they do recommend particular scenarios where, under medical supervision, supplements may be recommended³²

The British Dietetic Association goes along with this advice while also pointing out some of the known risks. The fat soluble vitamins (A,D, E and K) can all be stored in the body and therefore excess amounts are not excreted in the urine. Over consumption of these supplements can lead to someone being unwell.³³

The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) points out that 23,000 emergency department visits are directly related to the consumption of supplements and adverse reactions to toxic ingredients.³⁴

Some studies have shown increased health risks to supplementation for specific conditions. This is often in contrast to studies showing that an increase of nutrients from a healthier diet leads to the opposite.

An Australian study found that increased consumption of folate from dietary sources was associated with a lower risk of esophageal cancer. In contrast a high intake of folic acid from supplements was associated

³¹ *Dietary supplements market: Tighter rules, better counseling a must*, Sara Berg
<https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/public-health/dietary-supplements-market-tighter-rules-better-counseling-must>

³² *Do I need vitamin supplements?* NHS,
<https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/food-and-diet/do-i-need-vitamin-supplements/>

³³ *Supplements: Food Fact Sheet*, bda.uk.com, <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/supplements.html>

³⁴ *Vitamins and Nutritional Supplements: What Do I Need To Know?* Michael Incze,
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/2720139>

with a higher risk of precancerous lesions that lead to esophageal cancer.³⁵

Other trials have shown that supplementation of beta carotene can cause an increased risk of stomach and lung cancer while increased vitamin E supplementation can increase risk of prostate cancer and colorectal adenoma. Both beta carotene and vitamin E supplementation increase overall risk of mortality!³⁶

I have taken some of the following information from Dr Michael Greger and his website *NutritionFacts.org*. You can visit his website or youtube channel for videos covering the following studies:

A Swedish study involving 35,329 women concluded that multivitamin use was associated with an increased risk of breast cancer.³⁷ This is a staggering piece of evidence as so many women take these products assuming they will help to cut the risk of such diseases. Up to 40% of American women are currently taking a multivitamin without realising this risk.

This is further backed by data from the Iowa Women's Health study (a sample of 38,772) women. This study suggested that use of dietary supplements, and in particular iron supplementation, may be associated with increased mortality risk.³⁸

Many of these studies are observational and the evidential strength of them could be questioned. However, there have been studies that have the added benefit of being randomised, double blind and placebo controlled trials.

The Physicians Health Study II was a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial of a common daily multivitamin that began in

³⁵ High intake of folate from food sources is associated with reduced risk of esophageal cancer in an Australian population, Ibiebele et al, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21178085/>

³⁶ Nutritional supplements and cancer: potential benefits and proven harms, Michelle Harvie <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24857143/>

³⁷ Multivitamin use and breast cancer incidence in a prospective cohort of Swedish women, Larsson et al, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20335555/>

³⁸ Dietary supplements and mortality rate in older women: the Iowa Women's Health Study, Mursu et al, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21987192/>

1997 with continued treatment and follow-up through June 1, 2011. It involved 14,461 men above the age of 50. Some were given a daily multivitamin and others were given a placebo.

The aim was to see if this would affect their risk of developing cardiovascular disease. In conclusion they simply found no difference in the two groups. The multivitamin had no effect on protecting the men from cardiovascular disease.³⁹The message of the researchers was that multivitamins were a distraction in the fight against cardiovascular disease and that healthy lifestyle changes were the best option.

An even more authoritative study, a meta analysis of a number of randomised controlled trials has also been published. This study brought together data from 21 studies involving 90,000 people. This study actually sought to figure out if multivitamins were causing an increase in mortality across the board.

The conclusion of this study suggested that multivitamins showed no mortality risk but also showed no particular benefit.⁴⁰

Finally, a large analysis of evidence by the US Preventative Services task force sought to look into the question of the purposes benefits and potential risks of taking vitamin and mineral supplements. They concluded that there was limited evidence of any benefit coming from supplementation overall, though two studies showed a small benefit on cancer in men, but no effect on cardiovascular disease or living longer in general.

The editorial to this study suggested that we should stop wasting our money on vitamin and mineral supplements and instead source them from a diet rich in fruits and vegetables.

³⁹ *Multivitamins in the Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease in Men: The Physicians' Health Study II Randomized Controlled Trial*, Sesso et al, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3501249/>

⁴⁰ *Multivitamin-multimineral supplementation and mortality: a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials*, MacPherson et al, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23255568/>

Conclusion

There is no consensus to the idea that supplements or multivitamin products should be taken to ensure that a person is getting the nutrition they require. There is no evidence that supplements are in general effective, health promoting or safe.

With potential risks involved in the taking of supplements, it would be unwise and potentially dangerous to make any blanket recommendation to take supplements as an addition to a healthy diet. If you believe you are at risk of deficiency this is something to speak to your doctor about.

Wide spread support from major organisations is found for the alternative idea. We can and should get the nutrition we need from our diet.

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6. The “It is easier to go raw in the tropics” Myth

It is well known in the raw vegan community that human beings come from the tropics. Many people that transition towards a raw vegan diet develop a longing to return to all that is natural. They start to dream about living in a tree in the jungle, walking barefoot and picking luscious tropical nutrient dense fruit all day and swimming naked under crystal clear waterfalls.

These are beautiful dreams and it is no wonder that many people are looking for an escape from the harsh reality of the modern world. The world around us is hardly conducive to living in peace, harmony and perfect health and there are many modern factors putting our body under stresses that it is not designed to handle.

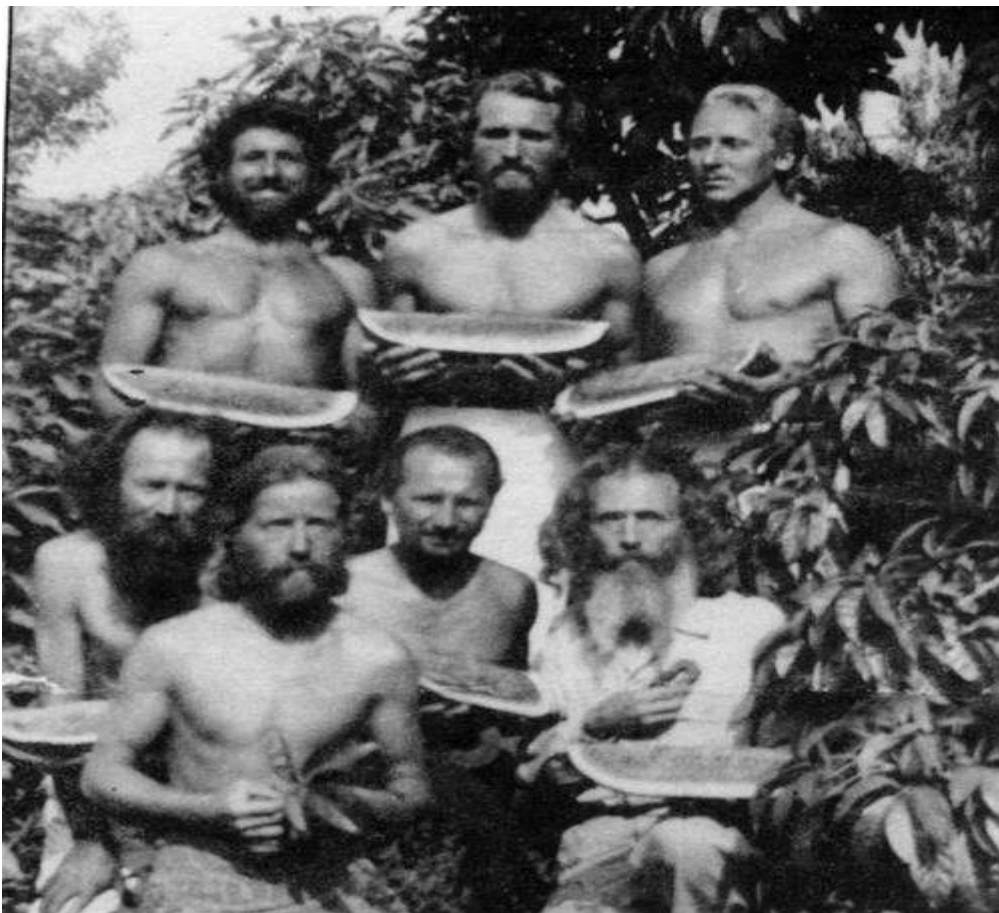
People are under-slept, under-nourished, and over stressed. Modern life is complex and new problems seem to turn up every day. On top of all this, the media is designed to continually drive people into a sense of fear and panic around every little issue that comes along.

Discovering the raw vegan diet is a real wake up call to a new reality. Many people start to look at their life deeply and ask themselves what they really want. They realise that the rewards of modern living, the bright shiny objects, luxuries and comforts that are on offer are no longer nourishing a deeper hunger that they have connected with.

That deeper hunger is for connection, adventure, nature and living in line with principles of healthy living. For many, it seems like they have been ignoring their true desires for years.

Years ago I started to notice that there were many people I would affectionately call “fruit bums”, people that left their job or university course and other earthly responsibilities behind to head off in search of living as a nomad often travelling through South East Asia or South and Central America in the search of fruit and freedom.

This desire to leave the modern world behind is not a new phenomenon. In his book *“Children Of The Sun: A Pictorial Anthology From Germany To California: 1883 to 1949”*, author Gordon Kennedy shares stories and pictures of German health and nature pioneers who moved to California in search of living a more free and natural life. They searched for fruit to forage, left their hair and beards to grow long, walked barefoot and sun bathed naked. They were the original hippies and inspired the back to nature counterculture of the 1960s. Below is a picture of some of these “nature boys” from Topanga Canyon 1948:



The Story Of August Engelhardt

Another case of escaping the modern world in search of getting back to paradise is the story of August Engelhardt. Though wikipedia may not always be the best or most accurate source of information, the article there on Engelhardt goes into fascinating detail about his ultimately sad tale of attempting to create a tropical community in New Guinea.

His desire to create a community of nudist cocoivores (a term for people living on coconuts) led to a number of deaths and his own apparent insanity. A real cautionary tale for those looking to attempt to live a natural lifestyle in the tropics. You can read more here:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Engelhardt

The best place to thrive on a raw vegan diet

Though I have spent time in the tropics, I never truly became a fruit bum. I never quite disconnected from my life in the UK in search of the optimal tropical environment. But whenever I have been to tropical locations (including some incredible paradise islands and beaches) I always found that as wonderful as the weather can be, I did not personally think that these places were much better for living on a raw vegan diet consistently. Occasionally, I found that I lacked community and friendship and sometimes felt a little isolated in countries in which I did not speak the local language and was not part of the local culture.

Instead I have found that the best and most optimal environments I have found for thriving on a raw vegan diet (and truly just loving life in general) have been at raw vegan events and gatherings I have attended such as The Woodstock Fruit Festival, Danish Fresh Food Festival, Austrian Fresh Food Festival, Slovenia Fruits, Fruit Winter in Thailand And Health Festival and the Spanish Puraw festival. I also began my own event UK Fruitfest, which has taken place every year since 2014. You can learn more about that at fruitfest.co.uk.

For me, community is actually a much bigger factor in making this diet effortless to thrive on than weather and tropical food availability. I thoroughly recommend attending a fruit festival over simply choosing to backpack across South East Asia. I feel a little sorry for those who have not experienced the unique magic of the fruit festival events and have chosen instead to travel alone in South East Asia and other tropical fruit spots. Relying on fruit alone for fulfilment and happiness simply does not work for very long.

Despite this, I can totally understand why people new to this lifestyle will assume that a raw vegan diet is much easier to sustain while living in a tropical country. From my experience, I have seen very little evidence of this being the case.

The usual arguments are that the warmer weather takes away the old excuse that a person can not eat a raw food diet in the cold weather. But on top of this is also the suggestion that somehow by being in a warm climate a person will naturally choose raw food and will no longer care for warm cooked food.

Evidence for this is hard to find. Recently, I visited one of the hottest places I have ever been, Playa Del Carmen, Mexico (in August). I struggled in the intense heat each day but clearly the locals were used to it. I could see that people commonly bought foods that were boiled or fried in oil from local stands regardless of the heat. This is common worldwide. Even in the hottest climates, the heat does not stop people from eating any less warm food than people in colder countries.

In colder countries, do people stop eating ice cream, soft drinks with ice, ice cold beer and other cool treats and beverages during the winter? Perhaps this is the case but they are still all regularly consumed regardless of the weather outside. Which is really touching on the important point.

Regardless of what the temperature says OUTSIDE, we spend most of our life INSIDE. Even those in warm countries live under shelter or stay indoors with air conditioning when it gets very warm. Most people commonly eat indoors in an environment in which the temperature has been regulated. So should it really matter whether the food is heated or not?

Many people say that raw food is “cold food” but it is not. Unless it has just come out of the refrigerator, raw food should really be room temperature food. It is only cold in comparison to cooked food which people often actually eat at a temperature much closer to room temperature also.

When people go raw, it is rarely the temperature of the food that they miss. If this was the case their desire for something warm would be satisfied with a warm banana smoothie. Rarely is the warmth truly what people are looking for.

Tropical places are not the raw food paradises people would like to believe. They still have the temptations of restaurants and fast food on the street available all day and night long like everywhere else. I have even met people that fell off of their raw vegan diet in places like Thailand.

As for the variety, quality, availability and nutrient density of tropical fruits in tropical locations, the truth is that the reality is not always what people like to picture. Many people look at me baffled when I tell them that in my opinion Europe and the US are much better locations for fruit quality and variety than many parts of the tropics. Though the tropics can have very special fruits like Durian and Cempedak that are rarely available in the non tropical countries the variety outside of that can be less than people expect. A typical fruit stall in Thailand will have yellow mangoes, bananas, papayas, pineapple, mangosteen, longans and potentially durian and jackfruit or cempedak. All wonderful fruits of course but there is rarely a great deal of variety beyond this from my experience and the truth is that people become used to it very quickly.

Often people assume that these tropical fruits will be grown locally, in mineral rich soil and completely organic. But there is as much chance that the fruit has been transported from just as great a distance as supermarket fruits in the UK. After all, a great deal of fruits in the UK arrive from Spain by truck and boat. As for soil quality (which we have already discussed as likely not being an issue) and organic status (which we will discuss later) there is no guarantee that either are better simply by being in the tropics.

Is the fruit in the tropics better in quality?

The answer is yes and no and it depends. On my first arrival in Thailand, I had high hopes that the fruit was on another level. I was convinced by people making videos online that the tropical fruit in Thailand was much sweeter and more flavourful than other countries. Personally, what I found was that this was not exactly the case. For sure, if you want to experience the best durian you probably have to experience it fresh in South East Asia and the mangoes and mangosteen are excellent and consistently tasty but I have also found some of my best fruit experiences have come from supermarket bought fruits in the UK.

The Pakistani mangoes that are often available in Asian shops through the summer in the UK are just as good as any mangoes in Thailand and probably better. Triumph persimmons are one of the best fruits you will ever eat with an intense sweet flavour. I found these in Tesco, not in a tropical fruit market. The snowball melons available in the UK are among the best fruit I have ever had. I look forward immensely to flame grapes whenever they arrive. Then there are blood oranges in January from Italy that have a strong flavour and rich dark colour and Discovery apples in late summer that have a deliciously fragrant aroma and stained pink inner flesh. The white flesh nectarines in the summer, the juicy strawberries, the crisp blueberries are all highlights at various times of year. Consistently, bananas, apples, pineapples, grapes, south american mangoes and citrus are available through the year not to mention an excellent variety of avocados and tomatoes for salads.

Many of these delicacies are simply not available in places like Thailand and South America. I enjoyed and embraced both and when I have surveyed and asked friends who are long term raw vegans, mostly they suggest that they are comfortable in either place with sticking to a raw diet.

A real fruit lover understands that there is always poor quality fruit everywhere but that the adventure is about finding the good stuff which

is always there too. If they have to live on bananas and apples for a while, then no big deal. They will enjoy the simple life for a while.

Are foods in the tropics more nutritious?

There is a good argument that as we are tropical creatures, we are better designed to eat tropical fruits and the nutrition we get from them will be better. It is hard to find any solid evidence on this concept and in general it is possible to get a range of tropical and subtropical fruits wherever we are living.

For me the idea that someone might be failing on a raw vegan diet because of a lack of nutrition in supermarket foods is highly unlikely and has not been my experience. For this and the other reasons outlined above I would suggest that the idea that living in the tropics makes it easier to be a raw vegan is not correct.

Personally, I would prefer to have the variety and year round consistency of supermarket fruits to tropical fruit stalls. I think it is important to be happy with both and be comfortable with eating a raw vegan diet wherever you are.

5. The “Nutrient Dense Foods Are The Healthiest And Best Foods” Myth

The phrase “nutrient dense” is commonly used to indicate how healthy and ideal a particular food is. One definition of this concept is this:

“Nutrient density is usually described as the concentration of nutrients per 100 kcal of food, but sometimes it is stated per 100 g or serving size instead”⁴¹

In the plant based movement, Dr Joel Fuhrman created the ANDI score (aggregate nutrient density index) to rank foods for nutrient density. He devised a simple formula:

Health = nutrition / calories

Fuhrman states that:

“Adequate consumption of micronutrients – vitamins, minerals, and many other phytochemicals – without excessive caloric intake, is the key to achieving excellent health.”⁴²

He has compiled a list of foods that come highest in nutrients per calorie and appears to be implying that these are the healthiest foods for us. A list taken from his website, *DrFuhrman.com* has been added to the next page. We will go through this list a little in a moment.

⁴¹ A proposed nutrient density score that includes food groups and nutrients to better align with dietary guidance, Drewnowski et al. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6489166/>

⁴² ANDI Food Scores: Rating the Nutrient Density of Foods, Joel Fuhrman, M.D. <https://www.drfuhrman.com/blog/128/andi-food-scores-rating-the-nutrient-density-of-foods>

Dr Fuhrman's Aggregate Nutrient Density Index (ANDI)

Rank	Food	ANDI Score	Rank	Food	ANDI Score
1	Kale	1000	37	Sunflower Seeds	64
2	Collard Greens	1000	38	Kidney Beans	64
3	Mustard Greens	1000	39	Green Peas	63
4	Watercress	1000	40	Cherries	55
5	Swiss Chard	895	41	Pineapple	54
6	Bok Choy	865	42	Apple	53
7	Spinach	707	43	Mango	53
8	Arugula	604	44	Peanut Butter	51
9	Romaine	510	45	Corn	45
10	Brussels Sprouts	490	46	Pistachio Nuts	37
11	Carrots	458	47	Oatmeal	36
12	Cabbage	434	48	Shrimp	36
13	Broccoli	340	49	Salmon	34
14	Cauliflower	315	50	Eggs	31
15	Bell Peppers	265	51	Milk, 1%	31
16	Asparagus	205	52	Walnuts	30
17	Mushrooms	238	53	Bananas	30
18	Tomato	186	54	Whole Wheat Bread	30

19	Strawberries	182	55	Almonds	28
20	Sweet Potato	181	56	Avocado	28
21	Zucchini	164	57	Brown Rice	28
22	Artichoke	145	58	White Potato	28
23	Blueberries	132	59	Low Fat Plain Yogurt	28
24	Iceberg Lettuce	127	60	Cashews	27
25	Grapes	119	61	Chicken Breast	24
26	Pomegranates	119	62	Ground Beef, 85% lean	21
27	Cantaloupe	118	63	Feta Cheese	20
28	Onions	109	64	French Fries	12
29	Flax Seeds	103	65	White Pasta	11
30	Orange	98	66	Cheddar Cheese	11
31	Edamame	98	67	Apple Juice	11
32	Cucumber	87	68	Olive Oil	10
33	Tofu	82	69	White Bread	9
34	Sesame Seeds	74	70	Vanilla Ice Cream	9
35	Lentils	72	71	Corn Chips	7
36	Peaches	65	72	Cola	1

What are the problems with this concept of nutrient density?

Intuitively, it seems absolutely right. We should want to get the maximum nutrition from our food. The more nutrients the better surely? Especially when dietary deficiency has been a real threat in our past and still is for some.

But the concept of nutrient density falls for one key nutrition fallacy:

“The highest source is the best source”

Years ago, I learned an important lesson from Dr Douglas Graham, author of *The 80/10/10 Diet*. We have essentially been trained to assume that a food that is a high source of a particular nutrient is therefore the best source. But is this correct?

If we take this idea to its logical conclusion then the highest source of fat is processed oil or lard, the highest source of carbohydrates is pure sugar and the highest source of protein is a concentrated protein powder each of which are processed foods that have had other nutritional elements stripped out. Looking at whole foods only, it would be easy to see that foods that are the highest source of one particular nutrient are likely to be problematic to our health in other ways.

In one list, beef jerky comes up as the highest source of protein per gram with parmesan cheese coming in second place⁴³. The rest of the list is topped by cheese, nuts, seeds, and other forms of meat. Beans and tofu are a little further down.

To be the best source of a particular nutrient, I would suggest that the food should carry with it no potential health risks with its consumption. Beef jerky does not pass that test. The World Health Organisation has red meat and processed meat on their list of carcinogenic foods with links to colorectal cancer and potentially stomach cancer.⁴⁴ Can we truly

⁴³ 41 High Protein Foods, Nick Harris-Fry, <https://www.coachmag.co.uk/nutrition/healthy-eating/3525/high-protein-foods-16-of-the-best>

⁴⁴ Cancer: Carcinogenicity of the consumption of red meat and processed meat, WHO <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/cancer-carcinogenicity-of-the-consumption-of-red-meat-and-processed-meat>

say that a food that is connected with cancer can be the best source of a particular nutrient?

The article itself points out a flaw in this idea:

“According to the National Diet And Nutrition Survey, adults in the UK consume about 45-55% more protein than required each day. The reason for that isn’t that everyone in the country is seeking to bulk up – it’s that protein is found in significant amounts in a wide variety of delicious foods that we’re already eating regularly.”⁴⁵

If we go towards the highest source of a particular nutrient, rather than making sure we get enough nutrition we may actually be consuming an excess of certain nutrients. This may help us to avoid deficiency of those nutrients, but eating an excess of nutrients can also come with problems.

Studies suggest that high protein diets, for example, come with many risks:

“Extra protein is not used efficiently by the body and may impose a metabolic burden on the bones, kidneys, and liver. Moreover, high-protein/high-meat diets may also be associated with increased risk for coronary heart disease due to intakes of saturated fat and cholesterol or even cancer”⁴⁶

Clearly, we can not therefore assume that the highest source is the best source.

Should calorie dense foods be downgraded?

There is a more confusing idea held within this concept of nutrient density. That is that if a food is high in calories that it is less nutritious or less healthy than other foods. Though obesity is clearly a concern in the

⁴⁵ 41 High Protein Foods, Nick Harris-Fry,

<https://www.coachmag.co.uk/nutrition/healthy-eating/3525/high-protein-foods-16-of-the-best>

⁴⁶ Adverse Effects Associated with Protein Intake above the Recommended Dietary Allowance for Adults, Ioannis Delimaris, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4045293/>

developed world, should higher calorie healthy foods like fruit take the blame and be seen as less healthy?

Evidence suggests that the consumption of more fruit in the diet actually has an anti obesity effect. One review from the Nutrients journal suggests:

“Considering the amount of simple sugars found in fruit, it is reasonable to expect that their consumption should contribute to obesity rather than weight reduction. However, epidemiological research has consistently shown that most types of fruit have anti-obesity effects. Thus, due to their anti-obesity effects as well as their vitamin and mineral contents, health organizations are suggesting the consumption of fruit for weight reduction purposes.”

With evidence consistently showing that fruit is not a risk for obesity, why would we create a chart in which fruit is downgraded due to it's caloric content?

Take a quick look at Fuhrman's table and we find that bananas are lower in the chart than milk, eggs, salmon and shrimp. Given that Dr Fuhrman has long been a proponent of a plant based diet, it seems unlikely that he would seriously consider these animal foods to be healthier than bananas. But that is what basing dietary recommendations on “nutrient density” leads to.

Do we really need density of nutrients?

Another question that comes up is where is the great need to get this density of nutrients? MORE nutrients is not the problem in today's world. In fact, as has already been suggested above MORE nutrients are the problem today.

We do not have wide scale nutritional deficiencies anymore in the developed world. The reality is that these rarely happened even in the past in which extreme and restricted diets led to these problems

occurring and they were often easily solved with simple dietary shifts using whole foods (not supplements).

Do we really need to worry about nutrient density? It would appear the answer is no.

Instead of Nutrient Density - What?

What we should really be concerned about is getting the best source of our nutrients. That comes from eating the foods that are best for us. The raw vegan argument of course is that human beings are frugivorous primates. As Carolus Linnaeus, the father of the study of taxonomy wrote:

“Man’s structure, internal and external compared with that of the other animals, shows that fruit and succulent vegetables are his natural food.”

Though frugivores do not eat exclusively fruit, it is the preference and the food that makes up the bulk of our calories. Therefore the best source of our nutrients, with the exception of Vitamin D from sunlight and Vitamin b12 from bacteria, will be from fruit. Regardless of the fact that fruit is not the highest source of protein, minerals or essential fatty acids, in fact fruit is always our best source.

Conclusion

The idea that the nutrient density of a food is an accurate indicator of the benefit it has to our health is false. The idea that nutrient density in general is particularly important lacks evidence. Our best source of nutrition does not come from the most nutrient dense foods. It comes from the foods we are best designed to eat. For our species that is fruit.

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8. The Urine Therapy Myth

I remember standing talking to some friends at the UK Fruitfest when famous vegan athlete Tim Shieff came over with a large plastic bottle containing a just off clear liquid filling the bottle to the top. Something told me that this was not water.

Tim had achieved worldwide fame as a parkour athlete and had a big following in the vegan community. He had an interest in experimenting with a raw vegan diet and other healing practises such as fasting, though as far as I knew he never committed for a long period of time to the raw diet.

He was guzzling this liquid with gusto. It turned out that the liquid he was drinking was in fact his own urine. He had been drinking large quantities of his own urine each day and believed it to be having a benefit to his health. Apparently he had also experimented with drinking the urine of other people also.

Where he got the idea to do this was a mystery to me but it certainly is not an unheard concept. I remember seeing a man on the television when I was a teenager claiming that drinking urine stimulates the body to detox. He never explained why this would be a good thing or why the body would require stimulation to carry out the detox processes that it consistently takes care of without our notice.

Urine drinking is a practise that is not generally taught by anyone in the raw vegan movement. For those that tend towards a more natural hygiene approach drinking urine would not make any sense.

The idea of stimulating a reaction in the body goes strongly against the philosophies of that approach. From a scientific perspective, there is no particular evidence suggesting that drinking urine has any health benefits, though it also has little negative effects.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ *The Truth About Urine*, Marisa Cohen,
<https://www.webmd.com/urinary-incontinence-oab/truth-about-urine>

This does not stop urine drinking becoming a craze every now and again. It seems that people can get very obsessed with this. I remember one youtuber breaking a long dry fast with urine which he also poured into his eyes believing this was helping to bring toxins out of the body.

What does urine consist of?

Urine is mostly water, which is why it is relatively safe to drink. Diluted in this water is a combination of salt, electrolytes such as potassium and phosphorus, urea and uric acid. Urea is the form in which the body eliminates excess nitrogen and is a chemical used widely in fertilisers. Urinating on your soil may therefore be good for your plants.

Generally those who practise urine drinking believe there is more to it than that. They are recycling hormones, stem cells or even some kind of biological information that the body can use. Perhaps they also believe there is life force that they are conserving in some way?

Where does the idea come from?

The practise of urine drinking is not new. In fact it has a history in yoga and other traditions⁴⁸. One of the major influences in the field of urine therapy is a book called "*The Water Of Life*" written by naturopath John Armstrong in the early 20th century. This is a book which I believe Tim has suggested as an inspiration in interviews.

In this book, the author talks about his time suffering from tuberculosis. After medical treatment did not work he went on his own programme of fasting and drinking only urine. Within months he was cured. He eventually set up a practise and helped others with this programme and documented these cases in the book.

It is no surprise that he received great healing benefits with this practise. After all, if you are suffering as a result of a poor diet and you stop

⁴⁸ *Does Urine Therapy Work?* Acharya Vasudeva, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/does-urine-therapy-work/articleshow/11958030.cms#:~:text=Urine%20therapy%20is%20not%20a,varies%20from%20the%20ancient%20method.>

consuming that diet then it is likely that your body will quickly set about bringing you back to health.

The urine did not cause the healing, this was the work of the body. Potentially the urine may have actually got in the way of the body healing to the best of its ability.

Not surprisingly, there is no evidence to support urine therapy as having any medicinal benefit.⁴⁹ There could even be a detriment due to bacteria being introduced into the body from the urinary tract.

Tim is no longer a vegan and I have not been following him closely. Apparently he was having health issues for which he performed a long water fast to help solve. Finding that this did not work he went back to a conventional diet.

Some claimed that he may have had a bacterial infection in his gut that could have been treated with antibiotics but this was not proven. Could his urine drinking have caused or brought on a problem?

It is not clear though youtuber Goji Man has done a series of videos on this subject and actually had access to medical tests that Tim undertook. His opinion was there were potential gut issues that were exacerbated by water fasting.

You can view more on this here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tx9M4v6Li-M> or search on Youtube for Goji Man “*Why Didn’t I Fix Tim Shieff’s Gut Problems*”.

Conclusion

Though drinking your own urine is most likely safe, there is no proven reason to do this and no good argument for why this would confer a benefit to you that other sources of nutrition can not. If we trust in the

⁴⁹ *Urine: The Body's On Health Drink*, Maxine Frith, <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/urine-body-s-own-health-drink-5335496.html>

body's wisdom we should assume that it is very careful about what it gets rid of and we should not question that opinion.

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7. The “Raw Vegan Diet Made Me Lose My Sex Drive” Myth

When I first started to learn about the raw vegan movement around 2011, one of the main online forums was called 30 Bananas A Day. People would write about their experiences on a raw vegan diet and others would respond with theirs. One topic that came up more than once were the claims that women had experienced their breasts increasing in size due to being on this diet (despite the fact their waists had shrunk, apparently).

This could have been wishful thinking as the co-founder and leader of the forum, Freelea the Banana Girl, had an almost impossibly flat stomach and disproportionately large breasts. However, hers were from surgery and not from bananas it turned out.

On the other side, Harley (the other founder of the forum) would occasionally claim that a raw vegan diet was good for blood flow and could increase the size of a man's penis and improve his erections. Some men have suggested they believe this was somewhat true for them. But the fact that neither of these rumours are commonly discussed suggests that these effects are probably not as dramatic as some people wished to make out.

Varying claims have been made over the years as to the effect of a raw vegan diet on libido and sexual performance.

The Raw Brahs were an enthusiastic and stupendously fit trio of brothers that went on a raw vegan diet for a short period of time and gained a lot of attention. However, they fell off of that path for a number of reasons and a story that one of the brothers told was that he had lost his “morning wood” (the erections that men often wake up with). They claimed that these erections had returned the moment they began eating fish again. This is not the only time I have heard of this claim being made.

Though no research exists on raw food diets and erectile function in men, there is research to suggest no negative effect of a plant based diet on erectile function.⁵⁰

Meanwhile another study from the same researchers suggested that more plant based diet intake was associated with less incidence of erectile dysfunction in men.⁵¹

Sometimes claims are made that in order to make enough of our own sexual hormones we require the fats from the bodies of animals to create these. There is no evidence behind this idea being correct and studies on vegans in men have shown normal testosterone levels. Studies have shown that although vegans had higher testosterone levels, this was off set by higher levels of sex hormone binding globulin.⁵²

A wider review of the research has suggested that nutrition does not have a direct link to hormone levels:

“In comparison with factors such as age and BMI, nutrients do not appear to be strong determinants of sex hormone levels.”⁵³

Later the same review suggests:

“Dietary intervention studies have not shown that a change in dietary fat and/or dietary fibre intake is associated with changes in circulating sex hormone concentrations over the short term.”

⁵⁰ *The association between plant-based diet and erectile function in Chinese young healthy men: A population-based study*, Yi Lu et al, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33694187/>

⁵¹ *The association between plant-based diet and erectile dysfunction in Chinese men*, Yi Lu et al, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33980148/>

⁵² *Hormones and diet: low insulin-like growth factor-I but normal bioavailable androgens in vegan men*, N.E Allen et al, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10883675/>

⁵³ *The effects of diet on circulating sex hormone levels in men*, N.E Allen and T.J Key, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19087438/>

If a raw vegan diet has caused someone to lose their libido why would this be?

There is one thing that is sure to cut off your libido. Losing your libido can be one of the symptoms of undereating. One study suggests that in times when we lack enough food our body will prioritise:

“The maintenance of reproductive function requires a considerable amount of free available energy. Thus during times when food availability and energy supplies are low, it would make evolutionary sense to redirect any available energy to maintaining brain function and cognition.”⁵⁴

It is common for people, especially those starting off on a raw vegan diet for the first time, to eat much less than they require. This can lead to fast weight loss and people can become underweight if they do not adjust the quantity they eat. The small amount of research around the raw food diet supports the idea that there is a correlation between a raw food diet and lower BMI and in some cases people being underweight. This is in line with the idea that people can easily undereat on a raw food diet.⁵⁵

It is common for people to make this mistake at first on a raw vegan diet. For most people, it is confusing as to why this would be the case. Surely, if we give our body it's natural and most suitable diet it would signal to us exactly the right amount to eat? Though this seems intuitively correct, in practise this is not what happens and the tendency for new raw vegans to under eat is exceptionally common from my experience.

We can not simply write off stories of losing libido to under-eating though this is probably often the case. If the claim is accompanied by a person losing weight, experiencing low energy, thinking about food all the time

⁵⁴ *Caloric restriction: Impact upon pituitary function and reproduction*, Martin et al, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2634963/>

⁵⁵ *Consequences of a Long-Term Raw Food Diet on Body Weight and Menstruation: Results of a Questionnaire Survey*, Koebnick et al, <https://www.karger.com/Article/Abstract/12770>

and feeling anxious, depressed or grumpy there is a very good chance they are simply under consuming.

Why is it so easy to undereat on a raw vegan diet?

There are a few factors that seem to contribute towards this. Firstly, people have been trained from a young age to eat in a completely different way. They eat meals in a short space of time and generally those meals fit comfortably on an average sized plate. They may have the habit of only eating 3 times a day and not eating after a particular time. Often people have experience of being told not to eat too much fruit. All of these habits go against thriving on a raw vegan diet and must be unlearned to some degree.

Secondly, the volume of food required to get the same calories on a raw vegan diet is different. Fruits and vegetables are the least calorically dense foods in our diet. This means they have less calories for the space they take up in our stomach. Some raw vegan educators claim that raw vegans have to take some time to train their stomach to take in a greater volume of food (stretch your stomach). The idea here is that the stomach has shrunk to an unnaturally small size due to being so used to a diet consisting of a smaller volume of food. Others dispute that this is the case, but either way it does appear to be the case that the habit of eating higher volume fruit meals takes a little time to master.

On top of this, cooked and processed foods are much more easily overeaten. Many of these foods have on purpose been designed to make them hard to stop eating. The science is not clear on whether cooked and processed foods are truly addictive but in public surveys it is clear that people seem to rank cooked foods as being more addictive than raw foods.⁵⁶ When we switch to a raw vegan diet we no longer have these addictive signals making us go back for more and more and it takes time to get in touch with our true desire to eat.

Thirdly, raw vegans feel hunger in a different way. The concept of true hunger is often spoken about by raw food teachers which refers to

⁵⁶ More on food addiction here: <https://fruitfest.co.uk/is-cooked-food-addictive/>

hunger being felt closer to the throat rather than in the stomach area. For me, it was clear that the usual hunger that I felt in my stomach had disappeared. It became a little confusing knowing exactly when I was hungry or not. It took time and experimentation to start to get a better handle of this and truly learn to eat enough. I find that hunger is a more subtle feeling and is more a general sense of desiring to eat rather than a sensation in any particular part of my body. However, when hunger signals change it is easy for people to assume their body actually does not want to eat.

Are there any other reasons that a raw vegan diet could reduce a person's libido?

One thing that is common is that the change to a raw vegan diet can lead to a profound inner transformation in some people. Some people report going through strong spiritual and emotional changes. It is no surprise that this kind of profound inner transformation can have an effect on a person's sexuality.

It could be the case that they are no longer satisfied or turned on by the pure physical side of sex and are looking for a deeper and more fulfilling connection. Some may find their entire approach to intimacy has changed. This is mostly speculation on my part and suggestion, but it is entirely possible. In a video on this topic, Michael Arnstein (The Fruitarian) and founder of the Woodstock Fruit Festival) claimed that his libido changed on this lifestyle:

“When I became a fruitarian I experienced countless physical, emotional and spiritual changes. One very interesting observation that I noticed was that my lust or sexual urges had subsided. When I stopped eating overt fats completely and my body fat settled between 3-5% I clearly acknowledged that I had sound control over sexual desires.”

You can watch more about Mike's experience in his video Fruitarianism and Sex Drive: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpwAl8Kwuxo>

The connection between erectile dysfunction and cardiovascular disease

The symptoms of cardiovascular disease are similar to those found in erectile dysfunction: atherosclerosis, endothelial dysfunction, structural vascular damage and subclinical inflammation. Erectile dysfunction and female sexual dysfunction are common among patients with cardiovascular disease and risk factors such as hypertension, diabetes, obesity and metabolic syndrome.⁵⁷

Though much is written about the psychological factors relating to erectile dysfunction, in reality one of the most common factors is vascular disease:

“Endothelial dysfunction, even without definitive arterial stenosis, as well as atherosclerosis with definitive stenosis of blood vessels, contributes to the problem.”⁵⁸

Studies have shown that an improvement in the lifestyle factors that reduce risk of cardiovascular disease also help with improving sexual functioning.⁵⁹ This was supported by a study showing an improvement in erectile function for men with metabolic syndrome that were put on a mediterranean style diet. The study concluded:

“Mediterranean-style diet rich in whole grain, fruits, vegetables, legumes, walnut, and olive oil might be effective per se in reducing the prevalence of ED in men with the metabolic syndrome.”⁶⁰

In 1990, Dr Dean Ornish’s Lifestyle Heart Trial was the first to show that lifestyle intervention (including a low fat vegetarian diet) could lead to the regression of heart disease in even severe cases.⁶¹ Dr Caldwell

⁵⁷ *Sexual Dysfunction, Cardiovascular Risk and Effects of Pharmacotherapy*, Imprialos et al, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28595561/>

⁵⁸ *Erectile dysfunction and atherosclerosis*, R.Kloner and M.Speakman, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/12162940/>

⁵⁹ *The effect of lifestyle modification and cardiovascular risk factor reduction on erectile dysfunction: a systematic review and meta-analysis*, Gupta et al, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21911624/>

⁶⁰ *Mediterranean diet improves erectile function in subjects with the metabolic syndrome*, Esposito et al, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16395320/>

⁶¹ *Can lifestyle changes reverse coronary heart disease? The Lifestyle Heart Trial*, Ornish et al, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/1973470/>

Esselstyn followed up in 1995 with a study that showed that a low fat plant based diet was effective in reducing cholesterol levels and arresting and reversing heart disease.⁶²

If the factors leading to cardiovascular disease are similar to erectile dysfunction then if we can reverse heart disease with a plant based diet, it follows that erectile dysfunction may be able to be routinely reversed also. If the addition of more plant foods in a mediterranean style diet improves erectile dysfunction that is further evidence to support this idea. In this situation, a raw vegan diet may predictably improve sexual function rather than inhibit it.

Conclusion

Should we have any concern that a raw vegan diet can diminish our libido?

A healthy libido is simply part of a healthy functioning body. We should not be scared that the diet that is healthiest and best for our body is unable to support the functioning of our sexual drives.

Furthermore, research does not suggest a connection between a vegan or plant based diet and issues with hormones or sexual function. Research shows improvements to function with an improved diet. This follows in line with plant based diets being shown to help reverse associated issues such as heart disease.

⁶² *A strategy to arrest and reverse coronary artery disease: a 5-year longitudinal study of a single physician's practice*, Esselstyn et al, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/7500065/>

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9. The Dangerous Dry Fasting Myth

Earlier in this book, I have mentioned my late friend Dr Robert Lockhart. For me Robert was a wise elder of the raw vegan movement that had a wealth of knowledge about health and the human body. When he started to speak about dry fasting it was something I had never really heard of and it seemed dangerous and probably unnecessary. Despite that, I always thought he knew what he was doing.

In those talks he made it clear that no one should attempt dry fasting unless they had at least 5 years experience on a raw vegan diet. I can not remember the exact rationale for that recommendation but it seemed like he had some concerns about it.

I have no idea how often he dry fasted but I remember he would dry fast for the duration of flying from Australia to the US (a 24 hr trip at least). I never asked him about the full extent of his dry fasting in detail but it appears this was not an uncommon thing for him to do. He also spoke against drinking water; talking about it having deuterium oxide in it or being "heavy water" as he called it. He made the claim that dry fasting allows for a deeper level of detoxification.

Robert seemed to be attempting to experiment with living as long as he could. This led to his experimentation with practises like caloric restriction and dry fasting. It turned out that this potentially had the opposite effect for him. In the report given out by his family after death they specifically mentioned the practise of dry fasting and that this may have led to the significant scarring found on his kidneys. This damage was part of the complication that led to his demise.

On top of the previous damage, it is not entirely unlikely that Robert may have dry fasted in response to becoming sick with an infection. Dehydrating the body is not a wise response to infection (in which the body requires all the resources it can to fight off the infection).

It turns out that despite his many years of study and research and self experimentation in health and healing he was still capable of falling

under the spell of a practise that was significantly damaging to his health without him either realising or being willing to accept that he was wrong about.

Naive proponents of dry fasting have suggested to me that Robert was clearly doing something wrong. They can not accept that if Robert, a 30+ year raw vegan and chiropractor was not able to do this practise safely then most likely no one can. They will not listen, it is some kind of a strange religion that exists around the practise.

Robert is not the only story I am aware of in which death has occurred as a result of this practise. Harley and Freelea, founders of the famous raw vegan forum 30BananasADay.com, had a story of a house mate of theirs that died after dry fasting. There is also an unfortunate story of a young man named Matthias Ulrich for whom it appears dry fasting may have played a part in his death. Matthias was a fruitarian living in Africa and had become infected with Malaria. Generally, malaria can be treated with anti malarial medication but despite this he passed away. On the death certificate it stated that he died of dehydration. Suggestions from friends are that he avoided going to the hospital and had likely tried to dry fast to help with the malaria (despite the fact that this had not worked in a previous bout with malaria).

These are 3 stories I am aware of without attempting to make a full investigation into this subject. Imagine how many more examples may be out there?

One of the saddest things for me in the modern raw vegan movement is the spread of the practise of dry fasting. This practise is so dangerous and so immediately damaging to the body that I hesitate to even include it in the book. Similar to radio stations banning songs that are deemed to be unsuitable for the public to hear (leading to the public rushing out to listen to the song and find out what the fuss is about) I am concerned that the mere mention of dry fasting will proliferate this idea and lead others to experiment with it.

For me, those who promote dry fasting are directly leading to major damage and potentially death for those that are influenced by them. I have banned this topic from being spoken about or promoted in any of the events that I have created.

What is dry fasting?

It is likely that you are aware that fasting is a practise of abstaining from food for a period of time and consuming only water. The philosophy of fasting is that when we halt the digestive process through eliminating food, the body is able to channel its energy and resources towards healing.

Dry fasting is taking this process one step further and abstaining from water also. Many people have heard the idea that a person can live for only a few days without water but in reality people can survive longer without water as those who practise dry fasting have proved. However, the true cost of their actions is something they are potentially unaware of. I have heard stories of people going without water (and no other source of liquid) for 7 days and beyond. Some have taken it to dangerous levels where it is almost guaranteed that they have done some permanent damage to their kidneys in the process.

Science behind dry fasting?

There is not much science on the impact of intentional dry fasting but there is plenty of research on the effect that dehydration (also called hypohydration) has on the body.

The effect of dehydration on wellness and overall physical performance has been shown. It has been found that:

“even short periods of fluid restriction, leading to a loss of body mass of 1-2%, lead to reductions in the subjective perception of alertness and ability to concentrate and to increases in self-reported tiredness and

headache...In exercise lasting more than a few minutes, hypohydration clearly impairs performance capacity”.⁶³

One study showed that even a small degree of hypohydration led to a significant impairment in endothelial function.⁶⁴ Potential links between hypohydration and the incidence of other diseases has also been notice:

“Epidemiological studies have shown an association, although not necessarily a causal one, between a low habitual fluid intake and some chronic diseases, including urolithiasis, constipation, asthma, cardiovascular disease, diabetic hyperglycemia, and some cancers.”⁶⁵

It is further pointed out:

“increased mortality, especially in vulnerable populations, is commonly observed during periods of abnormally warm weather, with at least part of this effect due to failure to increase water intake”

With apparent risks involved in internationally causing dehydration, what is the appeal that the practise has to people?

Why are people doing this?

Despite these dangers, people are still enthusiastically promoting dry fasting. What is the appeal of this practise? As it has never really appealed to me I can only look at examples of what others say. One of the stories that is shared about dry fasting is that there was an experiment in Russia on people that had radiation poisoning from Chernobyl. According to Tonya Zavasta there was a doctor that used dry fasting to help people heal from radiation poisoning.⁶⁶

⁶³ *Impact of mild dehydration on wellness and on exercise performance*, R.J Maughan, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/14681709/>

⁶⁴ *The effect of hypohydration on endothelial function in young healthy adults*, Arnaoutis et al, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26864199/>

⁶⁵ *Hydration, morbidity, and mortality in vulnerable populations*, Ronald Maughan, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23121352/>

⁶⁶ *Radiation...What Can You Do?* Tonya Zavasta <https://beautifulonraw.com/radiation-what-can-you-do.html>

It was observed that water fasting had a limited effect on helping them detox from the radiation but dry fasting had a more powerful effect. Personally, I see there to be a lot wrong in this story and I am doubtful about whether these experiments have been properly critiqued or peer reviewed by other researchers.

Tonya Zavasta says this about dry fasting on her website beautifulonraw.com:

“During a dry fast, the body survives on so-called endogenous or metabolic water, produced internally as a result of metabolizing fat tissue. Unlike any exogenous water, this metabolic water is of superb quality, produced by the hard work of our own cells. It literally erases any negative information imprint which the body had before the fast, allowing cells to experience a kind of a rebirth, as a result.”⁶⁷

She provides no source for these claims and most of it sounds like a kind of wishful thinking. As for living on metabolic water from body fat, Dr Douglas Graham shared his thoughts on this in an excellent article on dry fasting:

“Some proponents of dry fasting say that water is not needed when fasting, as you access plenty of water from the body fat you lose. Fasters convert (lose) about two pounds of fat per week into fuel, and fat is about five percent water, by weight, meaning that losing two pounds of fat makes available less than two ounces of water during an entire week of dry fasting. Consider that medical science suggests that we require more than two hundred times that amount, and you can hopefully understand my concerns.”⁶⁸

Dry fasting is an extreme experience and some people like to push themselves to extremes. Some people have a personality that pushes them towards extremes. Perhaps some people get a thrill from the

⁶⁷ *Dry Fasting Phenomenon: From Deprive to Thrive*, Tonya Zavasta, <https://beautifulonraw.com/dry-fasting-phenomenon-from-deprive-to-thrive.html>

⁶⁸ *Is Dry Fasting Desirable Or Deadly?* Dr Douglas Graham, <https://foodnsport.com/blog/is-dry-fasting-desirable-or-deadly.html>

danger involved? Or they are hoping to get attention, respect or fame from their actions.

For some, dry fasting is a quick way to see a change in body weight. Dehydration is the quickest way to lose water weight and you will seemingly shrink down in size (when in reality most of what you appear to be losing will go back on as water when you start eating and drinking normally). Regardless of the fact that dry fasting is not a safe or effective way to lose weight I think that this plays a role.

It appears that people see dry fasting as a spiritual practise that stimulates growth, insight and spiritual experiences. Whether it is a good idea to push the body to the limit to stimulate spiritual experience is for each individual to decide for themselves. Perhaps there are better and less risky ways to grow and develop spiritually?

A friend of mine reported how good he felt when he drank water for the first time after his dry fast. It seems obvious to me that this would be the case. Similar to causing yourself any stress or pain, once it is relieved you feel fantastic. This is not a great reason to practise this.

Conclusion

There is very little evidence around the benefits of dry fasting. The claims made by those who promote dry fasting generally come from personal experience and are not backed by evidence. The dangers of dry fasting and cases of death relating to dry fasting should be enough for people to realise the risks involved and avoid this practise. There is much evidence for the connection between dehydration and a reduction in the performance and wellness of the body.

Of all the things in this book I am very clear on this one. This is one idea I will never support. I strongly urge you not to experiment with this concept and warn others away from it also.

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10. The Breatharianism Myth

In the famous book *Autobiography Of A Yogi*, the author Paramahansa Yogananda talks about going on a pilgrimage to meet a non-eating saint, Giri Bala. It was claimed that Giri Bala had not eaten food since the age of 12 and that she had been tested many times (once being observed for 60 not to have eaten while locked up at the Maharaja's palace).

She explained that at a young age after being scorned for her gluttonous habits by her mother in law, she prayed to God to be given a way to live without food. A master materialised before her and taught her a secret technique that she was never to share with anyone and from then on she never ate again. Mystical stories of this nature delight and enchant people.

For many people this book was probably their introduction to the concept of breatharianism sometimes called inedia. Today the term "pranic living" is often used.

Breatharianism has a strange history involving many unusual characters with bizarre ideas. They claim either to live on light, subtle energy or occasionally from a sacred nectar produced at the back of the throat. The concept is of course not based on any evidence and goes against everything we know about animal physiology. The fact that death from starvation still affects approximately 9 million people a year should be evidence enough of the unlikelihood of this concept.

Despite this, breatharianism has a strange and compelling power that draws many seekers of health and knowledge to its dangerous and dreary rocks.

It may be the case that more lies are told about what a person eats than almost anything else. People can be very secretive and sensitive about how they eat. When I have taken on clients for coaching, I have been surprised to find that the diet that they purported to follow on initial contact with them was sometimes completely different to the reality of their diet which I discovered later on.

The strangest lie of all is to claim that you require no food at all. This has not stopped many people claiming this over the years and gathering attention and a large following around them.

Why exactly is the idea so compelling?

Firstly, we already have a large amount of people in the world that suffer from eating disorders. The idea of living without food is immediately appealing to them as they are having issues with their relationship with food and often attempting to live on as little food as possible. I would speculate that many of those attempting to follow this are for at least a short period of time in the grip of an eating disorder.

Many people are perhaps attracted to what they see as the supernatural nature of the practise. Idolising their gurus as almost divine beings. Humans are very prone to developing cults of personality around charismatic leaders. This seems to be especially strong in the spiritual community in which gurus are attributed to have divine and other worldly powers. Breatharians will often talk about their practise in spiritual terms, using words like “pranic living” to describe a state of living on spiritual energy and they often suggest that practises like breathwork are important.

Other people become obsessed with the idea of inner purity and cleanliness. For clean freaks, this is the ultimate clean diet in their mind. Many people attracted to raw food seem to have this mentality. They have an anxiety around the idea of their internal purity and cleanliness that can go too far.

Maybe for some it is all about the feeling of control. Many people feel a lack of control when it comes to their diet and this causes them great distress. This may be due to experiences in their life in which they had no control in the past. Trying to assert control over what they eat may give them some sense of comfort. The truth is that we have little control over the deep drive to eat and will always give into it eventually or kill ourselves in the process.

I have also seen a tendency in people to want to move towards extremes in anything they do. I see some people as wishing to climb to the top of every social group that they enter. Some are looking for a fast route to stand out and prove themselves within a community. These people do whatever they can to gain attention and try to impress the group by going to the extremes of the behaviour in the group. I believe there is an aspect of this going on in those who go towards long extreme restrictive diets and fasts and breatharianism may to them be the most extreme option.

To me there is something very dark about breatharianism. When 25,000 people every day die of starvation and around 800 million live with hunger daily, the idea that rich westerners are posting on 1000\$ phones about how they can live on light (when they have never experienced a moment of unintentional hunger in their life) is incredibly self indulgent, depressing and shows an extreme lack of perspective.

In an interview recently, a lady that escaped from North Korea described her childhood. She said that when she was a child she had no idea how much food she could eat. She had never experienced being full in her entire childhood. The people around her were forced to eat rats at times due to the extreme poverty and lack of food. I wish the breatharians would talk to them about the idea of living on prana.

Breatharianism is an indulgence of wealthy countries with plenty of food. Being able to go without food by choice is only possible when you live in a situation in which you are sure there is an abundance of food to get later. If there was a genuine food shortage, would so many people be interested in this concept?

The sad thing about those that get caught up in this idea is that it is a dangerous cycle of despair. Living without food is an impossible goal and setting an impossible goal in life is a sure highway to depression and anxiety. When we set an achievable, but difficult, goal we gradually set about moving towards it. We learn about the process, try things out and try to model the success of others. As we make steps towards the goal we are filled with feelings of positivity that push us forward. But

when we set an impossible goal, like living without food, there is no sense of momentum forwards. There is no progress. There is no strategy that works and no model to follow. This leads to confusion, anxiety, depression and a great sense that we must be doing something wrong but can not work out what it is. Eventually we may just assume that there is something wrong with us, rather than the goal itself.

It is one of the worst wastes of time and energy I have ever come across. A fulfilling life does not come with self obsession into extremes.

Breatharian Gurus

Here are some examples of those that have promoted breatharianism:

Wiley Brooks

Wiley Brooks was the founder of the Breatharian Institute of America and received attention in 1980 when he appeared on the tv show "*That's Incredible*". If everything Wiley claims is true, he is truly the most incredible human in history, his website proclaims:

"Wiley has had past lives as : ADAM, ZEUS, ENOCH, JESHUA (JESUS THE CHRIST), JOSHUA, ELIJAH, JOHN THE BAPTIST, ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI, KUTHUMI, BALTHAZAR (KING OF SYRIA), MUGHAL EMPEROR SHAH JAHAN (Builder of the TaJ Mahal in Agra, India), JOSEPH SMITH AND WILLIAM MULHOLLAND." ⁶⁹

Despite claiming to live without food, Wiley was caught on more than one occasion consuming hot dogs, diet cokes and McDonald's burgers. He later claimed that these meals had special 5D properties and promotes this 5D diet on his website:

"You may drink as much as you desire of diet coke in the 1 liter size (include lots of ice) and at McDonald's (with caffeine) in the plastic

⁶⁹ <https://breatharian.com/>

bottles only. The double-quarter-pounder/with cheese meal at McDonald's is the other part of this diet.”⁷⁰

Further reading reveals that he sees McDonalds as being a particularly special place to eat:

“I highly recommend that you eat at McDonalds whenever possible. All McDonalds are constructed on properties that are protected by 5th Dimensional high energy/spiritual portals.”

It seems clear that Wiley Brooks gave up on telling people that he lived on breath alone a long time ago.

Despite this, you can view an old interview with Wiley on Youtube and find comments like this below:

“A Breatharian lifestyle is the future of humankind. Transcendence is inevitable in all areas of development to all degrees.”

“He's so smart. I'd like to meet him someday. :)”

“SUPERLATIVE. All the answers in one sweet video!”

Though we also find this comment:

“I worked for Wiley and lived with him for years. He DID eat. A lot and often. Claimed it was for experimentation purposes!”⁷¹

It goes to show that regardless of how far from reality this concept is and how unreliable it's teachers are, it never fails to grip people's imaginations.

⁷⁰ *Five Magic Names, Wiley Brooks*, <https://breatharian.com/fivemagicnames/>

⁷¹Wiley Brooks Interviewed By Tom Snyder <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rybFmE2qtaw>

Jasmusheen

Jasmuheen is perhaps one of the best known practitioners of breatharianism. Residing in Australia, she claims to have followers all over the world. She was tested by a TV show in Australia and the test was stopped on the advice of a doctor monitoring the situation and witnessing her declining health. She continues to promote these ideas to this day despite suggestions that some of her followers have come to real harm.

It is claimed that at least 4 people have died trying to follow her ideas including Verity Linn who died alone in a tent while embarking on a 21 day fast in the Scottish Highlands.⁷²

Genesis Sunfire

Richard Blackman was a professional rugby player turned personal trainer that was at one time a student of Dr Douglas Graham. Eventually he turned to a fruitarian diet and became an inspiration for people as a super fit fruitarian sharing fitness videos on youtube (These videos appear to be no longer available).

He started to attempt to live on less and less food eventually changing his identity and claiming to be a breatharian. His name changed to Jericho Sunfire and then eventually Genesis Sunfire.

It appears for a number of years, Sunfire was a darling of the spiritual woo woo circuit. He appears in a number of interviews on youtube with some achieving as many as 50,000 views. He claimed to live without eating and only drinking his own saliva. He also claimed that cleansing with salt was an important part of this process.⁷³

⁷²How Michelle Pfeiffer was seduced by a deadly cult that says you can live on air alone, Tom Leonard, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2508172/How-Michelle-Pfeiffer-seduced-deadly-cult-says-live-air-alone.html>

⁷³ Genesis Sunfire Interview by Diana Store, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDvdVEh835E>

As with many Breatharian gurus, he would offer consultations and bootcamps. These would often involve a salt water flush process (drinking 2 litres of water containing a tablespoon of salt⁷⁴).

After years of claiming to live without eating, Genesis came out to say he was no longer labelling himself as a breatharian. In a comment below one youtube video he says:

“I want those that are interested to know that I no longer promote breatharianism because it is a scam, none of the mainstream guru's live it yet they sell it as fact to the weak minded seeking something to believe in, I can tell you that it's all fake, all of it....anybody that really knew anything would know that the term breatharian is totally redundant and is a scam with the aim of parting easily fooled people from their money.”⁷⁵

Later he claims that he believes it is still theoretically possible for the human body to live without food and may be possible to live without liquid also. He blames the toxicity and stresses of the modern world as well as the de-evolution of humanity for why breatharianism is not possible in the modern world.

This is a common claim of breatharian gurus. That they would live without food if it were not for modern stresses and pollution.

I interviewed Genesis recently and enjoyed our conversation. He still claims to have lived for 2 years without food and but also said that his experiments with breatharianism were a mistake and that he believes it to be a scam. He openly eats now, I believe a vegan diet though many of his followers still wish to believe he is a breatharian. He told me that people that believe in this will still believe in their teachers even though they are open about eating food. You can watch the interview here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbJBk9Ybfvw>

⁷⁴ Genesis Sunfire Retreat, Yoga Sunfire
<http://yogasunfire.blogspot.com/2011/09/genesis-sunfire-retreat-friday-15th-to.html>

⁷⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDvdVEh835E>

Prahlad Jani

An Indian monk also known as Mataji claimed to live without food or water for 8 decades . He was tested for 15 days by the Defence Institute of Physiology and Allied Sciences in India. The Indian Defence Industry was curious to find if there was a scientific explanation for the claimed non eating state of the guru that could be used to help with defence personnel.⁷⁶

He was observed at all times under CCTV cameras. However, curiously, despite not being given food or water he was allowed time to bathe and to gargle. Though 15 days without food and water is not unheard of, the claims that he passed no urine or stool were very unusual. Also, when monitoring his metabolism the scientists suggested they did not see the usual changes of metabolism associated with fasting.

Sceptics pointed out issues with this scientific test. They suggested that the test had a number of flaws and that Jani was able to move out of sight of the cameras and also had his followers visit him. His gargling and bathing activities were not sufficiently monitored.

A team of independent experts asked for permission to assess the standard of the test but were not given permission to attend. The study was never published in a peer reviewed journal. Furthermore, the leader of the study, Dr Sudhir Shah has tried to prove this idea before and is a deeply religious Jain that perhaps has a bias towards these miraculous claims.⁷⁷

“Levels of Breatharianism”

If you are confused about this then do not worry. Even the gurus that promote this idea seem to be confused. A video from a modern guru, Ray Maor, establishes the “levels of breatharians”. A “level 4 breatharian”, in this model, is one who lives without food or water. As for

⁷⁶ *Defence Concludes Observational Study On Mataji*, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/DIPAS-concludes-observational-study-on-IsquoMataji/article16299365.ece>

⁷⁷ *India's Man Who Live On Sunshine*, Sanal Edamaruku, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2010/may/18/prahlad-jani-india-sunshine>

an explanation on how this is possible, do not hold your breath for a clear answer:

“for every cell there is an engine of light, our dna is more open, more wide and more complex than that of a tree, it requires an understanding that is beyond science and biology but something more metaphysical: dimensions, energy, vibration of the body, the consciousness that is interfering with the illusion of humanity and stuff like that”⁷⁸

The understanding of dimensions, energy and vibration are not beyond science at all but experts in these subjects may struggle to find how any of these concepts could replace food. It is unlikely that any breatharian has a true education and understanding in these topics but simply use them as a kind of mystical smokescreen that sounds good to their followers.

Level 3 breatharians, on the other hand, have gone through a particular initiation but still do consume food. Which really solves the riddle of how breatharians live without food and water. The answer is clearly that they do not.

Incidentally, Ray claims that he chose not to be a level 4 as level 4 breatharians do not look very good (being very lean), tend to be more feminine and have no interest in sexuality (they want to be one with spirit). The other levels appear to be people that have had various experiences with fasting.

Essentially, we are talking about a group of people who have worked out that it is possible for the body to go without food for longer periods of time than is conventionally thought possible. This idea is nothing new and should not really surprise anyone that has researched the subject.

The longest fast

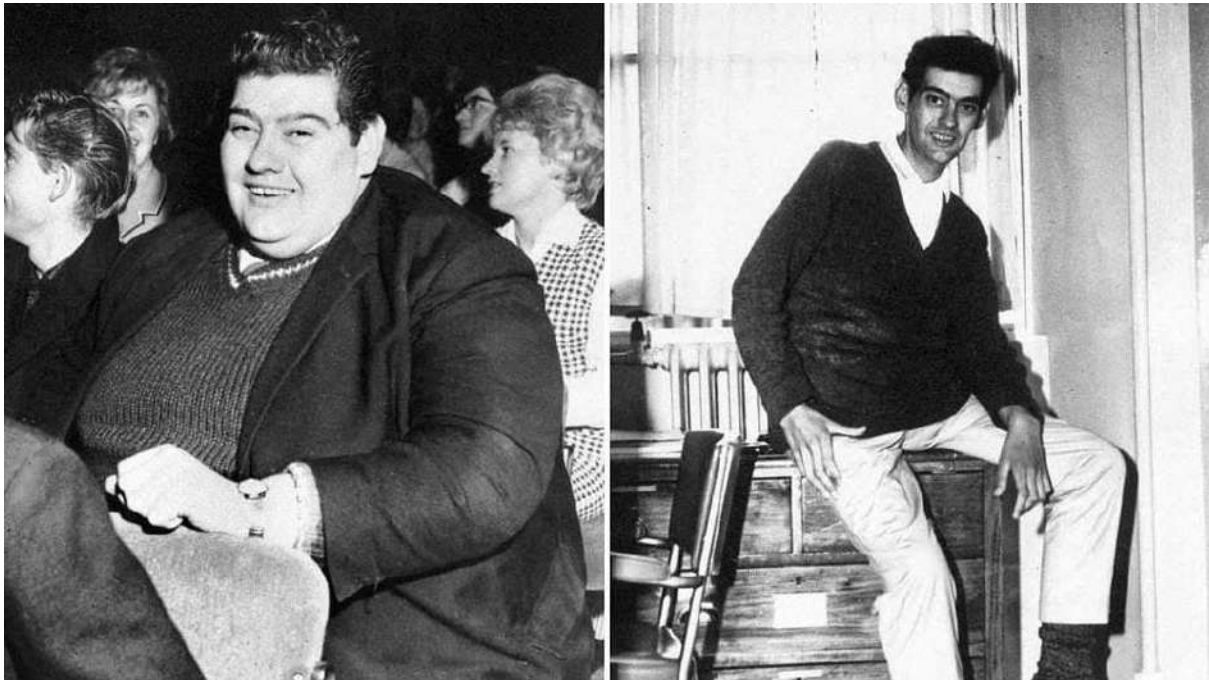
In 1965, August Barbieri the son of a fish and chip shop owner from Tayport checked in to a local hospital to announce that he was going to

⁷⁸4 Levels Of Breatharianism, Ray Maor <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MEHpaVIYk8>

undertake a fast to lose his excess weight. Weighing in at an initial weight of 31 stone 10 pounds (444 pounds), he certainly had a lot of weight to lose.

He lived on nothing but tea, coffee, soda water and vitamins for 382 days and lost 21 stone in the process (from June 1965 to July 1966).⁷⁹ A picture of Barbieri's incredible 13 month transformation is included on the next page.

Studies on Barbieri showed essentially no ill effects and it was seen as a successful therapeutic fast.⁸⁰



Though this is obviously an extreme case, there are many accounts of water fasts that have gone beyond 40 days. Kenny Saylor documented his 55 day fast in a youtube documentary you can view here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbMpvC1Y2xA>. He did this primarily to lose weight but put all of the weight back on and more later on

⁷⁹ *The tale of Angus Barbieri who fasted for more than a year – and lost 21 stone*, <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/dundee/2544215/tale-angus-barbieri-fasted-year-lost-21-stone/>

⁸⁰ *Features of a successful therapeutic fast of 382 days' duration*, Stewart and Fleming, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2495396/>

In the early 1980s, members of the IRA imprisoned in England went on hunger strike. Their first strike was called off after 53 days. In the second strike 10 men died with Bobby Sands (who had been elected to parliament during his hunger strike) dying on the 66th day of the hunger strike. A number of the hunger strikers lasted longer than this and Laurence McKeown survived more than 70 days when his family asked medical staff to intervene. It appears that many suffered long term damage to their health as a result though others may have fully recovered.⁸¹

Could it be that people experience the entirely possible experience of long term fasting and simply assume they are living on breath and light? It is hard to say exactly, though people are vulnerable to delusion and denial. Perhaps these gurus are simply charlatans that realise that they gain attention through their claims.

How do people get away with this?

Sadly, there is a magnetic appeal about this concept that will not go away. Also, leaders in the raw food movement have not been strong enough in denouncing this idea and some have even given it some credibility. At least one raw vegan festival I have heard of had a breatharian teacher give a talk which I personally think is highly irresponsible and dangerous for the attendees.

The teacher said that he would still eat food socially (clearly not a level 4 breatharian). According to a friend, he waved goodbye to everyone at the end and said he was going off to eat pizza with his family! You are probably confused as to why he was allowed to speak at a raw vegan event? Yes, sadly the raw food movement is prone to promoting this kind of nonsense at times.

For me, the concept is a miracle similar to being able to fly. Is there someone in the world with the power of levitation? More likely there are many people that are able to trick people to believe that they can

⁸¹ 1981 Irish Hunger Strike, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1981_Irish_hunger_strike

levitate. People are so desperate for magic that they won't question the experience. Then again if Jesus came back and was able to walk on water perhaps he could also live without food. Personally, the claims of this nature are far more likely to involve lies, deception and greed than an actual example of the miraculous.

Also, why is there any reason, need or desire to give up food? Food is a part of being human and one of the connecting similarities of all animals. We are not plants, able to make our nutrition from the ground and the sunlight, we must hunt, pick, look around and wander to find our food. It is deeply ingrained in us over tens of millions of years. It is wonderful that we live symbiotically with this fantastic planet that we call home.

We survive due to the delicate balance of a number of things we rely on in our environment and in the cosmos. The position and heat from the sun, the moon's effect on the seas, the atmosphere that surrounds the planet and how it shields us from excess radiation, the temperature around us and so on. We are completely dependent on this environment and food is a part of that. Food is our connection with nature and our connection with our past. It is our connection to the truth of the history of humanity as a frugivorous species. Why would we want to attempt to give this up?

Avoid this concept at all costs. It is a black hole of despair.

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Honourable Mentions

As I began the process of writing this book, more and more topics came to mind that I wanted to tackle but I did not have the time to give enough attention to them all in time for the deadline for this project.

If you would like to see a future volume covering the following topics then let me know. You can email me at info@fruitfest.co.uk.

- 1. The myth of intuitive eating** - Many people seem to think their body (after years of apparently neglecting to tell them to stop eating junk food) is all of a sudden providing intricate signals about which specific foods and nutrients it requires. I believe this idea is highly unlikely and would like to look into it more.
- 2. The myth of organic food** - controversial I know but I am not convinced that organic food is healthier, more nutritious or even better for the environment. I am highly doubtful that the public's perception of what organic means actually lives up to the reality. Though I have looked into this already, it deserves some time. Certainly one of the biggest myths in the world of natural health.
- 3. Tooth related myths** - Many myths surround the world of dental care. Humans are vulnerable to tooth decay mostly due to the modern diet. But this certainly does not make raw vegans immune to this damage and in fact mistakes made by raw vegans may put them at greater risk. Believing that brushing teeth is not required, avoiding fluoride toothpaste, beliefs in being able to regrow teeth and alternative approaches like oil pulling are all claims I would like to cover. Nutritional claims include that tooth decay is down to a lack of minerals (I highly suspect there is zero evidence for this one) and that acidic fruits rot the teeth are also topics I would like to look at.
- 4. Sunburn** - many raw vegans believe they are not at risk from damage from the sun. As long as they do not burn they believe that sunlight can only be a good thing. I believe that many people are making a big mistake that they may pay for later in life with skin damage. I would like to cover this topic more.

5. **Sprouts** - a number of foods are claimed to be the “healthiest” and in the raw food world sprouts are often seen as being in a special league of their own. I believe that these claims will most likely lack evidence but will cover this in the future.
6. **Muscle Loss** - the myth that going on a raw vegan diet will make you lose muscle or stop you gaining muscle.
7. **Lose weight by eating more** - This idea has done the rounds in the raw vegan world. Though few people seem to support it any more, it is worth looking at.
8. **Body odours** - do raw vegans smell and ..eh...*taste* better? Less need for cleaning products and shampoo? Can we find any truth to this?
9. **Diagnostic Tools** - Is iridology really a good way to diagnose illness? Can the muscle tests in Kinesiology provide the answer? How about those that claim to be “medical mediums” and so on? My suspicion is that there is little evidence for the effectiveness of any of these things.
10. **Detox** - I can’t help but think that this is one of the most misunderstood ideas in the raw food movement. Do toxins accumulate in the body? Do fruits detox the body? Do heavy metals appear in the brain? Do herbs help to speed up or slow down a detox? There is so much to look at further in this topic.
11. **Kidney Filtration** - Does the colour and contents of your urine tell you whether your kidneys are filtering or not? This seems highly unlikely but it has not stopped many people believing it.

...feel free to send other suggestions my way.

Epilogue

My hope with this book is that it will act as a lighthouse alerting you to rocky shores ahead on your journey to finding long lasting, superb health with a raw vegan diet. With this being such a small community, there is very little funding for research around this idea and very few large institutions and scientists take it seriously.

We are in the wild west to some extent, trying to figure out the boundaries and the risks. Though many people struggle with this diet due to simply not taking good advice on how to practise the diet, there are many that run away due to fear that stems from incorrect information fed by the culture around them.

Sadly, some raw food educators are spreading that fear also without realising the harm they are causing. Mainly I want you to realise that this is a nutritionally sound approach to eating and one that makes complete sense in every way. There are few drawbacks, but we can still make mistakes that lead us to harm. I would prefer that you get the benefits and avoid the drawbacks.

Let us walk together forward to a better world in which wonderful health is not unusual but is the norm for everyone. Supported by a Garden of Eden of tremendous fresh fruits that surround us every day.

About The Author



Ronnie Smith was born and brought up in Glasgow, Scotland on a mostly conventional diet. His brother being diagnosed as a diabetic led to some minor changes in the families diet and sugar was taken off the menu to a large extent. Later in life he started to become interested in what he could do to improve how good he felt every day. He made an early decision to avoid cigarettes, drugs and alcohol and started to drink more water in his teens (after avoiding it all his life).

Going through a time of low energy and low mood in his late teens after just leaving school, he started to experiment more with dietary changes and eventually realised his habit of bingeing on sugar was getting out of control. He struggled but eventually succeeded to cut out processed sugar from his diet. This was later followed by eliminating caffeine completely.

He always had an interest in the spiritual and paranormal and a strange coincidence led him to attending a spiritual group that was run by a vegetarian couple. They told him that working with spirit could lead you to changing your diet as meat was a lower vibrational food. Having practised meditation for 3 or 4 years on his own at this point (and having never missed a day of eating meat in his life) this seemed unlikely. But one night he came home from the group and had no desire to eat meat. This continued and he never ate meat again.

Gradually finding that he was moving away from animal foods entirely, he watched the film "Earthlings" which a friend shared on facebook and felt ready to try a vegan diet. He assumed a vegan diet came with some risks and was potentially less healthy and went to youtube to look up ideas.

A search for "how do vegans get protein" led to a video called "The Protein Myth" in which raw vegan athlete Tim Van Orden talked about living on fruits and vegetables and building muscle without trying. At this moment the light went on for Ronnie and it was as if something he knew deep down inside, but had never thought was possible, was revealed to him.

From there, he began to experiment with a raw vegan diet and started to research and learn more from online teachers. He felt the difference immediately with some minor (but growing) aches and pains in his knees and hips disappearing completely within a week of being vegan and raw. A new sense of childlike energy came to him and moments of deep connection with nature and amazing floods of gratitude confirmed for him that he was on the right path.

Despite this, cooked food was not easy to give up and he decided to take a pilgrimage to meet many of his favourite teachers at The Woodstock Fruit Festival in 2012. This turned out to be one of the best experiences of his life and he returned to the festival each year thereafter and remained on a raw vegan diet ever since.

He came home with a desire to help spread the message further and small fruitluck events in Glasgow led to weekends organised with friends from around the UK and this eventually led to the creation of the UK Fruitfest. UK Fruitfest has taken place annually since 2014 attracting over 800 attendees from around the world in that time.

He continues to be passionate about sharing this message with others at events and through online channels like the Love Fruit email newsletter, his youtube channel and the Love Fruit podcast.

To subscribe to the Love Fruit Newsletter (and get the 21 days of inspiration email series) click here: <http://bit.ly/lovefruitnewsletter>

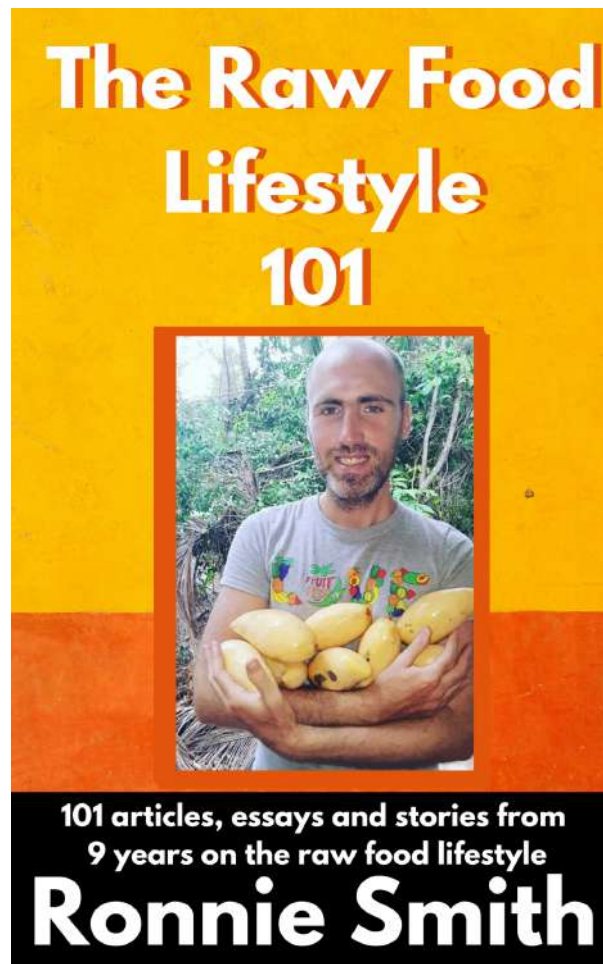
Listen to the Love Fruit Podcast (over 75 interviews with raw vegans) here: <http://bit.ly/lovefruitpodcast>

Watch the Love Fruit Podcast here: <http://bit.ly/watchlovefruit>

Subscribe to Ronnie's personal Youtube channel here: <https://www.youtube.com/c/fruityronster>

Learn more about the UK Fruitfest here: <http://www.fruitfest.co.uk>

Other Books By The Author - The Raw Food Lifestyle 101



**Discover The Secrets To Incredible Healthy,
Energy and Vitality On A Raw Vegan Diet and Lifestyle
From A 9 Year Raw Vegan**

For a limited time get the highly rated book ***“The Raw Food Lifestyle 101”*** at half price. Featuring the highly rated ebook plus 6 additional bonuses! This offer contains all of the essential information you require to successfully transition to a raw vegan lifestyle and stick to it long term.

This book is a series of articles, stories and thoughts regarding the raw vegan diet and lifestyle. This book is packed with information for a raw

vegan. It includes a comprehensive sections for Beginner's covering the basic information:

- **The 4 Common Mistakes For Beginner's To A Raw Vegan Diet** – learn about 4 things you must avoid on a raw food diet.
- **7 Steps To Success On A Raw Food Diet** – the 7 things all successful long term raw vegans have in common
- **How Much To Eat On A Raw Vegan Diet** – have you struggled with getting the right balance here? Learn how to eat enough on a raw vegan diet.
- **When Should You Eat On A Raw Vegan Diet?** - are you wondering whether it is ok to eat first thing in the morning, last thing and night and everything in between...learn more in this book.
- **Do You Need To Eat Greens On A Raw Vegan Diet?** - how important is the role of vegetables in a raw food diet. Can we be fruitarian? Learn more in this book.
- **How Much Fat Should You Eat On A Raw Vegan Diet?** - confused as to how to get enough healthy fats on a raw vegan diet? Or perhaps you are concerned about how much you seem to be consuming? Learn more in this book.
- **Can You Be An Athlete On A Raw Vegan Diet?** - many people associate a raw vegan diet with a cleanse or detox. Can we be athletic on a raw vegan diet? This is covered.
- **Is A Raw Vegan Diet Suitable For Everyone?** - is it possible that this diet may not be right for you? Could your blood type hold you back from being a raw vegan? Learn more in this book.
- **What Exactly Do We Mean By "Raw"?** - the true definition of a raw food diet and the only foods we can truly call “raw”
- **How To Eat Enough On A Raw Vegan Diet** – many people struggle with losing TOO MUCH weight on a raw vegan diet. Learn how to stop this in this book.
- **The Best Way To Transition To A Raw Vegan Diet** – transition can take time and for some people it is a difficult journey. If you are struggle with your transition this section will make it easier for you.

- **The Truth About True Hunger On A Raw Vegan Diet** – a very misunderstood concept in the raw vegan world. Learn exactly what true hunger is here.
- **The Number One Biggest Reason For Going Off Raw** – many people fail on a raw vegan diet. The biggest reason for people falling off the path may surprise you...
- **Does A Raw Food Diet Apply To A Certain Blood Type?** - Is it true that only a certain blood type will suit a raw diet? Learn more in this book.
- **9 Signs You Are Under Eating On A Raw Vegan Diet** – Find out about the 9 symptoms of under eating. Find out why this can be so common on a raw vegan diet and how to avoid it.
- **Back Up Plans On A Raw Vegan Diet** – What if you are unable to find your ideal raw foods. What are the best backup plans on a raw vegan diet?
- **Beware The Raw Food Snake Oil Salesman** – Learn about the lies and false conspiracies of snake oil salesmen in the raw movement and how they convince people to waste money on worthless raw food products.

All of this plus 6 extra bonuses!

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