

# Why You Should be Eating Raw Vegan for Optimal Nutrition



## The Benefits of Raw/Living Food Nutrition

### Raw and Living Foods help to provide: More Energy

When we eat raw and living foods that are easier for our bodies to digest, assimilate, and eliminate, we have more energy left over. This enables our body to cleanse, heal, and repair itself so we feel healthy, vital, and energized.

### Fiber

- Fiber is the indigestible portion of plant foods. Fruits, vegetables, sprouts, nuts, and seeds contain an abundance of dietary fiber.
- Fiber acts as a pre-biotic agent. This helps to populate beneficial bacteria in the gut for supporting immune and gastro-intestinal function.
- Fiber helps to regulate blood sugar by allowing the carbohydrates in food to be released into the bloodstream more gradually.
- Fiber helps to lower cholesterol.
- Fiber also keeps everything moving through the intestines, which prevents constipation.

## Two main categories of fiber

- **Soluble**
  - This type of fiber actually binds to cholesterol in the intestines and flushes it out of the body
- **Insoluble**
  - Is good for regularity
  - Insoluble fiber helps “bulk up” the stool and prevent constipation

## Vitamins and Minerals

Raw and living foods are very high in various vitamins and minerals. Sprouted foods have a very high nutrient-per-calorie ratio, which help us feel satisfied on fewer calories. This is in addition to having a high water and fiber content.

- We all know many of the other benefits of vitamins and minerals.
- Vitamins and minerals found in raw fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds are in a whole food complex with cofactors.
  - They are abundant and absorbable
  - They are synergistic in their effects

## Alkaline Minerals

- Fruits and vegetables contain beneficial alkaline minerals such as:
  - Magnesium
  - Calcium
- Most of the byproducts of metabolism in our bodies are acidic.
- Consuming alkaline foods helps counteract this acidity.
- Without minerals, vitamins have no function.
- Research indicates that calcium from our bones is often used to counteract this acidity, so eating foods that have an alkalizing effect may contribute to the maintenance of bone health.

## Phytonutrients

- Raw and living foods are very high in phytonutrients. Phytonutrients contain protective, disease-preventing compounds that interact with other plant nutrients to produce a synergy that can help fight many diseases. Some phytonutrients are lycopene, beta-carotene, and chlorophyll.  
Chlorophyll is the green coloring in plants
  - Helps to build blood
  - Has antioxidant properties
  - Has antibacterial, anti-fungal and anti-inflammatory benefits.
- Carotenoids
  - A group of phytonutrients that have yellow, orange, and red pigments
  - Act as antioxidants in the body
  - Yellow pigments – lutein and zeaxanthin
- They help to support optimal vision.
- The body utilizes these pigments to protect the back of the eyeball from the damaging rays of the sun (the macula).
- These two pigments work together synergistically to confer this protection.
- Are best obtained from yellow and green vegetables like summer squash and leafy greens.

## Antioxidants

Raw and living foods contain antioxidants which reduce free radical damage and help us age gracefully. Many phytonutrients also act as antioxidants. Antioxidants counteract the damaging effects of “free radicals.”

## Alkalinity

Raw and living foods help to maintain the proper alkaline pH in the bloodstream, which is very beneficial to the body in a number of ways, such as supporting energy.



## Calorie Density

- Calorie density is defined as the amount of calories in a given weight or volume of food.
- Filling our stomach helps activate stretch receptors which is one of the primary mechanisms that helps us feel satisfied.
- Three primary factors that determine calorie density
  - Water content
  - Fat content
  - Fiber content
- Water is by far the most significant determinant of calorie density, and raw and living foods have excellent water content.
- It is interesting to note that despite the high fat content, rich and creamy avocados still have less than half of the calorie density of brown rice cakes, indicating how water content plays a bigger role in calorie density than fat content does.
- The fiber content of a food contributes to the calorie density as well, but not as much as fat and not nearly as much as water.
  - Including lots of water and fiber rich raw and living foods in one's diet makes it easy to feel full and satisfied without eating excess calories.

## Plant Fats

- Higher fat raw plant foods, such as avocados and nuts and seeds, contain relatively healthy, unsaturated fats.
- These high fat plant foods contain plenty of their own fiber, which binds to excess cholesterol.
- Essential fatty acids:

- Two types of fats that the body cannot make, so they need to be obtained from diet. These are called essential fatty acids (EFAs).
- **Alpha linolenic acid** – Omega 3. Omega 3 fats reduce inflammation.
- **Linoleic acid** – Omega 6. Omega 6 fats generally promote inflammation.
  - Ideal ratio of omega 6 to omega 3 fats is between 1 to 1 and 4 to 1.
  - When we consume in excess of four times the amount of omega 6 fats compared to omega 3 fats, we tend to create excess inflammation.
  - Omega 6 fats
- The average American consumes 20 times more omega 6 fats than omega 3 fats.
- Omega 6 fats are largely found in animal products and processed foods.
  - Omega 3 fats
- Omega 3 fats are abundant in leafy green vegetables, flax seeds, chia seeds, hemp seeds, and certain types of algae.
- Smaller amounts of omega 3 fats can be found in fruits and non-green vegetables.
- The standard American diet (SAD) diet contains an over-abundance of omega 6 fats from:
  - Processed foods.
  - Commercially produced animal products.
  - Not enough fruits, vegetables.
- They contain the omega 3 fats that reduce inflammation.
- A diet based on raw fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds, and especially a diet that has an abundance of greens and includes some flax or chia seeds, supplies adequate amounts of omega 3 fats. This is without the excess of omega 6 fats, which is seen in typical modern human diets.
- Healthy fats and blood sugar regulation:
  - Glucose – blood sugar
  - Insulin escorts glucose out of blood and into cells
  - Insulin resistance – insulin is unable to do its job properly and blood sugar remains too high
  - Insulin resistance – is the hallmark of type II diabetes, also known as adult onset diabetes.

An excess of saturated fats, trans fats, and omega 6 fats, along with decreased amounts of omega 3 fats, make major contributions to insulin resistance.

Numerous studies have shown that diets that include more whole natural plant foods, instead of processed foods, can have a significant impact on insulin resistance and blood sugar levels.

- Cholesterol comes from two places: animal foods and your body.
  - Low fat and high fiber whole natural plant foods, such as raw and living foods, cause the liver to produce less cholesterol to make bile that emulsifies fat in the foods.
- Fresh raw and living foods also contain an abundance of fiber to bind to any excess cholesterol, thus keeping cholesterol at an appropriate level.

## Enzymes

- Raw and living foods are high in food-based enzymes.
- Enzymes are protein molecules that initiate biochemical reactions in all living things, plants and animals alike.
- Research indicates that plant enzymes are found within plant cells and are released when plant cell walls are broken down either by chewing, juicing, or blending.
- If plants are heated above 115°F the enzymes may denature or break down.

- Chewing raw plant foods well is important for releasing enzymes from plant cells.
- This gives the body a “head start” in digestion, creating less work and taking less energy, so you may feel lighter and more energetic than you would if you ate heated foods without active enzymes.

### **Increasing raw and living foods in your diet helps to provide:**

- More energy
- Feeling lighter
- Greater overall well-being
  - An abundance of nutrients
- Weight normalization over time
- Avoidance of hunger and deprivation
- It’s not just another diet, but a healthful, delicious, and – most importantly – sustainable way of changing your eating habits that you can happily maintain for a lifetime!

**Source:** The Hippocrates Health Institute Website, by Tom Fisher RN, BA