

Vegetarianism as one of the signs of eating disorders

Solodov Arthur Dmitrievich

Belarusian State Medical University, Minsk

Tutor - Kostiouchkina Oxana Mikhailovna, Belarusian State Medical University, Minsk

Relevance. Vegetarianism in its various forms is widely encountered in different societies all over the world and combines nutritional, social, behavioral and psychological aspects. There is much nutritional information concerning healthy life style. To avoid meat is recommend as a remedy and promise for longevity. This reason for abstaining from meat has led to the adoption of vegetarian diets. Despite the knowledge gained by the public about the association between diet and health, the proportion of patients suffering from eating disorders is rising. There seems to be a direct connection between the "Vegi" fashion and eating disorders which start typically in adolescence.

Aims: to find scientific data on advantages and disadvantages of vegetarianism and to corroborate or refute the link between vegetarianism and eating disorders.

Materials and methods. Analysis of scientific articles, publications and internet resources.

Results. It is revealed that vegetarian diets can reduce risk of certain cancers by up to 40%, decrease the possibility of heart disease by over 30% and decrease high blood pressure and cholesterol levels. However, some studies that have addressed the psychological characteristics of vegetarians demonstrate different picture of vegetarians. These studies show that vegetarians, especially women, are intensely concerned with being slim and, so demonstrate clear symptoms of eating disorders. Moreover, vegetarian women have been shown to suffer from depression and anxiety and from maturity fears, ineffectiveness and interpersonal distrust. These facts have been identified as fundamental aspects of anorexia nervosa psychopathology. Studies conducted in some European countries showed that vegetarian and semi vegetarian women had a lower self-esteem and more symptoms of depression and eating disorders than omnivorous women. In addition, vegetarian women had a more negative view of the world than semi vegetarian or omnivorous women did. Some studies suggest that vegetarians are healthier than omnivores and that a vegetarian diet is a safe approach to the prevention and management of many diseases, such as obesity, diabetes, coronary heart diseases and cancer. At the same time, vegetarians may be less happy than other individuals. The results extend previous findings that vegetarian women display enhanced emotional distress and symptoms of eating disorders. According to several USA studies teen vegetarians are more prone to eating disorders than non-vegetarians. In this study, vegetarians were more likely to contemplate and attempt suicide. Vegetarian males formed an especially high-risk group of unhealthy weight control practices. The research indicated that teens susceptible to emotional difficulties were drawn to vegetarianism as a means to lose weight and fit in, but that vegetarianism itself had no correlation with emotional difficulties. In another study researchers found college women who claimed to be vegetarians to have a significantly greater risk of developing eating disorders than their meat-eating peers.

Conclusion. Vegetarians may experience health benefits associated with increased fruit and vegetable intake and added benefit of decreased risk of overweight, obesity, cancer, diabetes, hypertension and coronary artery disease. However, vegetarians can have lower self-esteem and symptoms of depression in comparison with omnivorous people. Vegetarianism and veganism can be a mask of eating disorder. This doesn't mean vegetarianism is the cause of an eating disorder, or that people shouldn't adopt a vegetarian lifestyle, but it may be a way for an individual who is struggling with food and weight issues to justify her or his restrictive eating behavior.