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PLANT NUTRITION: HOW IT AFFECTS OUR HEALTH AND LIFE

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Relevance. Health is the most valuable thing we have. We can't live full life without it. That is why care we should take of our body requires as much attention as possible. Unfortunately, many of us believe that everything depends on our genes. However, we are what we eat. Nowadays, the vast majority of people don't think about it. Food is the biggest investment in our health. More than 60% of all global deaths are due to chronic diseases and conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and certain cancers. Global health authorities concur that in many cases the leading cause of death worldwide is associated with diet, even beating out smoking. While most people understand that fast food products are harmful, only a few people understand that a diet based on animal foods is definitely not ideal to preserve good health. And even fewer understand that choosing a diet with a wide variety of plants is the most powerful tool we have for the prevention, treatment and even reversal of diseases.

Aim: the study was carried out to emphasize people's poor understanding of the core principles of healthy food habits; to identify the most consumed food products; to work out a solution to this problem including possible changes in the menu.

Materials and methods. Sociological and statistical methods were used to assess what people prefer to eat and what they know about plant-based food. 176 respondents (92% of them were students of 17-23 years of age) were questioned about their food habits. Some scientific resources and medical sites were explored to find out topical information about advantages and disadvantages of both plant and animal-based food. Also, articles and the World Health Organization research links were studied.

Results and discussion. The results of the survey showed that about half of the respondents (51.1%) eat meat products every day; 28.4% do it several times a week; 16.5% eat it every other day and 4% of them don't eat meat at all. Half of the respondents (47.2%) prefer meat to bean and 41.5% eat both. Only 14.2% of the respondents refer to plant-based diet positively; 66.5% are neutral and 19.3% are sharply negative. About 40.9% don't see the point in renouncing meat products; 37.5% could try and only 18.8% would refuse. The poll also shows that only 39.8% of the respondents eat vegetables every day and 34.9% eat fruit every day while 13.7% prefer sweet food. 53.4% are not very well aware of the plant-based diet. About 40.8% of people think that plant-based nutrition is imperfect so if you are a vegetarian or vegan you will feel weak. The World Health Organization recommends a nutritious diet based on a variety of foods originating mainly from plants rather than animals. Moreover, WHO confirms that in this way 80% of all heart diseases, stroke, type 2 diabetes and over 40% of cancer would be prevented.

Conclusion. Nowadays, the condition of our health depends on what care we take of our health, including our eating habits. Today, there is a large number of food companies and lobby groups with the goal of making their products seem ideal for athletic performance, weight loss and health. But we should keep in mind that nature gives us all we need, and we should learn how to use it for our health benefit. In other words, while our genes can be a factor, the lifestyle choices we make are usually far more important.