

Odds are that you've heard of the Atkins, Zone, South Beach and the G.I. diet...

But you probably haven't heard of **Dr. David Jenkins**, whose research inspired the aforementioned diets.

Dr. Jenkins is credited with developing the glycemic index, a scale that measures the effects that various foods have on blood sugar levels.

A higher number indicates a slower rate of digestion, which prevents blood sugar levels from spiking and leading to an inevitable energy crash. The glycemic index came out in 1981, but now Jenkins is shaking things up again in the nutrition world.



After becoming the first Canadian to receive the Bloomberg Manulife Prize for the Promotion of Active Health in December, the University of Toronto professor informed the crowd that he himself follows a vegan diet and views it as the future of nutrition.

Formerly seen as a hipster or fringe lifestyle, veganism has gained more traction in recent years. And with Jenkins' statement, one can only assume that popularity will continue to rise.

His argument for a meatless, dairy-less, plant-based diet isn't only grounded in human health, but also environmental and animal health.



The health aspect

A plant-based diet is most often much lower in saturated fat and cholesterol than an omnivorous one. It's also rich in fiber, magnesium, vitamin E and C and folate. Vegan diets tend to be lower in calories than omnivorous ones, with vegans maintaining healthier weights.

The environmental aspect

Each year, more than 700 million animals are killed for food in Canada alone, often in corporate farming institutions commonly known as "factory farms." This intensive animal farming is one of the main sources for greenhouse gas emissions and, according to a 2012 study from the World Society for the Protection of Animals, it consumes the most water of any industry in Canada.

Large concentrations of domestic animals living in one location can also lead to water contamination. If the trend continues, and more and more meat is eaten, experts predict the growing animal agriculture industry will double in size by 2050.

The animal aspect

For Jenkins, consideration of the living conditions of factory animals also played a role in his decision to go vegan. Animals often live in extremely close quarters and some never experience sunlight in the course of their lives. Knowledge about these conditions might change how you view that steak on your plate.

How to eat vegan

No one is saying you need to wake up tomorrow and never touch meat again. Consider veganism as food for thought while grocery shopping or dining out. Just make sure you're still getting enough nutrients.

Emily Harris, ArtSci '16, who recently made the switch from vegetarian to vegan, recommends the app Cronometer. The app calculates the nutritional value of the food that you eat, including the iron, zinc and vitamin content.

If you're eating on campus, veganism doesn't limit your options. Besides the copious amounts of food available at the ARC grocery store, CoGro's hummus sandwich, quinoa and lentil salad options are vegan friendly. If you're at the cafeteria, look out for the VG symbol. Even the ARC pharmacy has vegan bars, such as The Simply Bar.

Perhaps try adding a couple of meatless days to your week or exploring some vegan options — you may be surprised by how good it feels.

Source: Queens Journal: Vegan Values