



# ***Things That Happen When You Stop Eating Meat***

**By Michelle McMacken, MD, FACP, DIPABLM**

**P**eople go plant-based for lots of reasons. These include losing weight, feeling more energetic, reducing the risk of heart disease, decreasing the number of pills they take ... there are dozens of great reasons! For even more inspiration, check out these other benefits you can expect when you go plant-based.

## **YOU'LL REDUCE INFLAMMATION IN YOUR BODY.**

If you are eating meat, cheese, and highly processed foods, chances are you have elevated levels of inflammation in your body. While short-term inflammation (such as after an injury) is normal and necessary, inflammation that lasts for months or years is not. Chronic inflammation has been linked to the development of atherosclerosis, heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, and autoimmune diseases, among other conditions.

In contrast, plant-based diets are naturally anti-inflammatory, because they are high in fiber, antioxidants, and other phytonutrients, and much lower in inflammatory triggers such as saturated fat and endotoxins (toxins released from bacteria commonly

found in animal foods). Studies have shown that people who adopt plant-based diets can dramatically lower their level of C-reactive protein (CRP), an indicator of inflammation in the body.

## **YOUR BLOOD CHOLESTEROL LEVELS WILL PLUMMET.**

Elevated blood cholesterol is a key risk factor for heart disease and strokes, two of the leading killers in the United States. Saturated fat—primarily found in meat, poultry, cheese, and other animal products—is a major driver of our blood cholesterol levels. Cholesterol in our food also plays a role.

Studies consistently show that when people go plant based, their blood cholesterol levels drop by up to 35% . In many cases, the decrease is equal to that seen with drug therapy—with many positive side effects! People who require cholesterol-lowering drugs can further slash their cholesterol levels and cardiovascular risk by adopting a plant-based diet.

Whole-food, plant-based diets reduce blood cholesterol because they tend to be very low in saturated fat and they contain zero cholesterol. Moreover, plant-based diets are high