Meat When Less Is More

By Katie Clark, M.P.H., R.D., C.D.E.

This program is designed to be presented at a chapter meeting. The topic addressed is the health benefits of shifting protein intake from high-fat meat choices to leaner meats and non-meat sources of protein.

Presenter Guidelines:

Materials Needed—

• 24-Hour Recall Data Sheet (see page 27)
• pens/pencils
• notecards on which to write two meatless burger recipes, if desired

Throughout the program, members will be asked to share their experiences and ideas about shifting protein intake towards leaner, more plant-based sources.

After greeting the members, begin. Distribute the 24-Hour Recall Data Sheet and pens/pencils and say:

On your 24-Hour Recall Data Sheet, write down all the foods and beverages you have had in the last 24 hours. Include the specific ingredient items when possible. For example, instead of “sandwich,” write “2 slices bread, 1 piece cheese, 2 pieces roast beef and mustard.” If you know the portion size or preparation method (fried, baked, sautéed, etc.), please include.

(Participants list ingredient and food and beverage items consumed since this time yesterday on the 24-Hour Recall Data Sheet.)

Now, go through your list and circle all the items that contain meat. Count up the number of different meats you ate in the past 24 hours and tally at the bottom of the list. For the sake of this conversation, let’s say meat is any animal flesh: beef, veal, poultry (turkey, chicken, etc.), lamb, fish, pork, etc. This also includes processed meats like bacon, bologna, lunchmeats and sausages.

(Participants circle and tally the items on their 24-Hour Recall Data Sheet that contain meat.)

Now let’s analyze our meat intake. Would someone care to share how many different types of meat he or she has consumed in the last 24 hours?

Initiate discussion about the animal content of participants’ food intake. Questions to elicit discussion can include:

• How many times a day are you eating meat?
• Are the meats on your list from fresh sources, processed, canned, or frozen?
• Is meat included in every meal and snack you had?
• What types of meats are people eating—ground meat, steaks, roasts, etc.?
• How are you preparing your meats—frying, grilling, sautéing, etc.?

The Power of Protein

During today’s Chapter Program presentation, we are going to look at the health benefits of shifting away from a meat-heavy diet and toward leaner and more plant-based sources of protein.

To begin, why is protein important? Having adequate protein in your diet assures that proteins in your body can do their specific jobs. In the body, proteins are responsible for:

• Providing structure in healthy hair, skin, nails and cells
• Initiating chemical reactions and maintain-
ing optimal pH and fluid balance
• Transporting nutrients and making antibodies to protect against infection

How much protein do you need per day?
The MyPyramid nutrition guidelines from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends that 17% to 21% of calories consumed in a day should come from protein. Since most healthy adults need a total of approximately 2,000 calories per day, that works out to 70 to 105 grams of protein per day. Most Americans get enough protein in their diet, and protein deficiency in our population is rare. However, we should be concerned about where that protein is coming from, as we know that different types of meat have varying effects on our health.

Where’s the Beef?
Meat consumption is higher than ever in the United States. In 2000, each American ate 195 pounds of meat during the year (pounds are in boneless, trimmed-weight equivalents). That’s 57 pounds more per year than we were eating in the 1950s! Meat consumption has risen alongside increases in two-income households and lower meat prices.

So what types of meat are we eating? According to the USDA, of the 195 pounds of meat the average American ate in 2000, the breakdown looked like this:
• 58% or 113.5 pounds from red meats: beef, pork, veal and lamb
• 34% or 66.5 pounds from poultry: chicken and turkey
• 8% or 15.2 pounds from fish and shellfish

Consider the Source
From a nutrition standpoint, the large proportion of red meat we are eating poses a bit of a problem. While red meats are good sources of protein, iron and other minerals, they are also the primary dietary culprits of some not-so-healthy things: excessive calories, saturated fat and cholesterol.

A recent study published in the journal Circulation suggests that high red-meat intake increases the risk of heart disease. The authors of this report followed 84,136 women ages 30 to 55 who were participants in the Nurses’ Health Study. The researchers found that replacing one serving of red meat a day with a serving of fish, poultry, nuts or low-fat dairy could reduce heart disease risk by anywhere from 13% to 30%.

In addition to “just” causing heart disease, it appears that a high intake of red meat is also associated with increased risk of heart failure. Heart failure is not as immediate as a heart attack; instead, it occurs when the heart is unable to pump enough blood to sustain the other organs. In a recent study published in Nutrition, Metabolism and Cardiovascular Diseases, the authors studying 21,120 healthy male physicians demonstrated that those with the highest intake of red meat—approximately 10 servings per week—had a 24% greater chance of developing heart failure than those who ate the least amount of red meat.

Processed Meats May Be Worse
As suggested by these two studies, nutrition experts and health professionals have historically encouraged people to avoid excessive red meat intake as a way to curb obesity and an increased risk of heart disease. However, a recent study suggests that consumption of processed meats—but not red meats—is associated with higher incidence of heart disease and diabetes. The authors looked at 20 studies that included 1,218,380 individuals. They found that those who ate 50 grams of processed meat (which equals about three slices of lunch meat) or more per day had a 42% higher risk of heart disease development and a 19% higher risk of diabetes than those who did not eat as much processed meat.

Powerful Red-Meat Protein Alternatives
While study findings often contradict other studies, it does appear that almost everyone would benefit from eating less red meat. So how exactly do you go about doing that?

The USDA’s MyPyramid recommends that most meat and poultry choices should be lean or low-fat. That means sticking to chicken and
turkey breast, seafood, and the leaner cuts of beef such as steaks and roasts. Here are some more tips for making lower-fat protein choices:

**The USDA MyPyramid’s “Tips for Wise Choices from Protein Foods Group”**

**Beef—Choose Round Steaks and Roasts**
- Roasts: choose round eye, top round, bottom round, round tip
- Other lean choices include: top loin, top sirloin, chuck shoulder and arm roasts

**Pork**
- Lean choices include: pork loin, tenderloin, center loin and ham
- Ground beef: Choose extra lean
- Look for at least 90% lean; 93% and 95% lean are also good selections

**Poultry**
- Boneless, skinless chicken and turkey breasts and cutlets are the leanest poultry choices
- Remove skin of other chicken segments before cooking

**Lunch Meats**
- Choose lean turkey, roast beef, ham or low-fat lunch meats
- Avoid high-fat lunch meats like regular bologna or salami

**Trying More Meatless Meals**
Including more meat-free protein options in a meal is another way to cut fat and calories, while also increasing your intake of other valuable nutrients. While animal foods are great sources of protein, there are many plant-based options as well.

Dried peas and beans—also known as legumes—and lentils are high in protein and fiber. You can add them to salads, soups, casseroles or other main dishes. Here are a few items to try:
- Black beans
- Garbanzo beans
- Great Northern, navy or cannellini beans
- Kidney beans
- Lentils
- Pinto beans
- Red beans

Using tofu or other soy foods is yet another way to incorporate protein without relying on animals. Veggie burgers made with soy products, soy milk and tofu-based stir-fries all can help you meet your meatless protein needs.

**Meat-Free, Once a Week**
Many organizations and groups are now promoting the adoption of more plant-based diets. While you don’t have to go entirely vegetarian, it doesn’t hurt to expand your meat-free meals. Consider trying one meat-free day a week. Visit www.meatlessmonday.com for recipe ideas and tool kits for including more meat-free options in your meal planning.

**Vegetarian Options**
Because vegetarian diets exclude most meats, they’re naturally free of red meat. People adopt vegetarian lifestyles for a number of reasons. The reasons can be health-related, environmental, religious, or simply because of personal preference. Regardless of the type of vegetarian diet, the focus is the same: to embrace a plant-based diet.

With a little planning, a vegetarian diet can be as nutritious as—or even more nutritious than—a traditional diet. Including dried peas and beans, soy foods, low-fat dairy products, eggs, or seafood (depending on the type of vegetarian diet you select) can assure adequate protein without needing additional meat. The chart on the next page explains the different types of vegetarian diets.

**Don’t Forget About Fish**
The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans encourage people to increase the amount and variety of seafood in our diets. Seafood is an excellent source of lean protein and important omega-3 fatty acids. Increasing the amount of seafood in your diet makes sense; every fish meal you eat is one more meat meal that you’re not eating!
THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF VEGETARIAN DIETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>What it excludes and includes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semivegetarian</td>
<td>Excludes red meat but may include fish and poultry, as well as dairy products and eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pescetarian</td>
<td>Excludes all animal flesh except fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacto-ovo vegetarian</td>
<td>Excludes all animal flesh but does include eggs and dairy products (milk and cheese)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacto vegetarian</td>
<td>Excludes animal flesh and eggs but does include dairy products (milk and cheese)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegan</td>
<td>Excludes all animal foods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seafood includes fish like salmon, trout and tilapia. Some examples of shellfish are shrimp, crab and oysters. Preparation method matters with seafood; dousing that meal with butter doesn’t help! Try baking, grilling or broiling seafood, and season with lemon and salt-free spices. Keep in mind that pregnant women should limit their fish intake to no more than 12 ounces per week.

**Building a Better Burger**

Summertime presents an excellent opportunity to get more “meat-free” with your food plan. One of the easiest places to start is on the grill. And what goes better on a grill than a burger? Here are a couple of meat-free burger recipes to enjoy:

**Sumptuous Salmon Burgers**

This quick and easy burger recipe using canned salmon with bones is a great way to boost your calcium intake.

- 1 can of salmon or a 6-oz. filet, skinned and chopped
- 1/4 cup chopped red onion
- 2 T. fresh chopped parsley
- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup whole-wheat breadcrumbs
- 1 T. Dijon mustard
- 1/4 t. salt
- 1/4 t. black pepper
- 1 t. hot pepper sauce such as Tabasco®

Mix all ingredients together and form into two patties. Cover and refrigerate one hour. Grill or cook on stove in frying pan coated with cooking spray. Serve on whole-wheat buns. 2 servings

**Lentil-Barley Burgers**

These hearty burgers can be prepared using leftover cooked barley, or cook the barley from scratch and add to ingredients mix.

- 1/2 cup dried lentils
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1 cup chopped red onion
- 1/4 cup diced or chopped, shredded carrot
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 T. ketchup
- 1 t. cumin
- 1 t. oregano
- 1/2 t. chili powder or Cajun seasoning
- 1/2 t. salt
- 1/2 cup cooked barley
- 1/2 cup whole-wheat breadcrumbs
- 1/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 1/2 t. black pepper
- 2 eggs
Place lentils in saucepan. Cover with water and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat and simmer 30 minutes or until lentils are tender. Drain. Mash half of lentils in a bowl. Puree other half of lentils in a food processor until smooth. Add pureed lentils to lentils in bowl. Coat skillet with nonstick spray and heat over medium-high heat. Add onion and carrot and sauté until tender. Add garlic, ketchup, cumin, oregano, chili powder or Cajun seasoning and salt. Cook 2 minutes. Combine onion mixture with lentils. Add remaining ingredients. Form into four patties. Cover and refrigerate 1 hour. Grill or cook on a stove in a frying pan coated with cooking spray. Serve on whole-wheat buns. 4 servings

**Activity for Next Week:**

Your assignment, to be completed prior to next week’s meeting, is to prepare one meat-free recipe. Again, you may go to [www.meatlessmonday.com](http://www.meatlessmonday.com) to find a variety of meat-free recipes. Try the recipe out for yourself, and we will all discuss our choices at next week’s meeting. If you find something you really like, bring the recipe to next week’s meeting to share with the chapter.

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# 24-Hour Recall Data Sheet

Date Food Recorded: _________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Food or Beverage</th>
<th>Amount Eaten</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11:45 am</td>
<td>bread</td>
<td>2 slices</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:45 am</td>
<td>cheese</td>
<td>1 slice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45 am</td>
<td>roast beef</td>
<td>2 slices (3 oz.)</td>
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