

# The V Word

by Heather Mills



## Could a plant-based lifestyle be the best therapy?

**M**any people use the phrase 'you are what you eat', but it's not often that we truly think of how deep a phrase that is.

Most of the time we talk about the physical benefits of living a plant-based lifestyle: weight loss, glowing skin, anti-ageing etc. But, truly, we don't discuss the effects a plant-based diet can have on mental health and wellbeing as much as we should.

### MY THERAPY

When I discovered veganism 25 years ago, I was purely thinking about healing my amputated leg from the infection that was refusing to leave it – following several difficult months in hospital. Little did I know that my

journey to plant-based living would help my psychological recovery, too. My ability to remain in a positive frame of mind, while recovering from a traumatic accident and having to adapt to living life with a disability, was very much down to converting to a plant-based lifestyle.

When you are seriously ill, you sometimes have to take extreme measures to get well as quickly as possible. In my case, I converted to a plant-based diet. Following the failure of antibiotics on my system and my desperate need to ensure the constant re-infection of my leg did not lead to a 4th amputation – which would mean losing my knee – I saw plant-based living as a form of alternative medicine and therapy. I had no idea I was starting on the path of what was to become

my lifelong commitment to better, kinder, eco-conscious living.

### MAKING THE TRANSITION

I am hoping that whilst you read this you have no life - or limb-threatening illnesses, and can start your journey to a plant-based lifestyle by educating yourself on what works for you. This will lead to a series of trials and errors, as not everybody can enjoy, or even digest, all types of plant-based foods – but your efforts will be worth it! If you have trouble, go slowly, whilst your body adapts to all this healthy fibre.

If, like me, an illness destroyed your digestive system (Lyme disease) you will need natural hydrochloric acid and digestive



enzymes. Hydrochloric acid will break down any proteins you consume, while digestive enzymes will help to break down carbohydrates. I cannot stress my point enough that without these components working efficiently in the digestive system – no matter the type of food you're eating – you will get gas and bloating, and your body will not be able to absorb the maximum amount of vitamins and minerals.

When your digestive system is not working correctly, your moods will be greatly affected. It's not something people often link: the stomach and the brain, but we have millions of cells in our stomach that are connected

to our brain, so it is vital to have a clear system. As strange as it might be to think about, a constipated body often leads to a constipated, unhappy mind. Do not underestimate how vital a healthy digestive system is to your moods!

• *For more information please visit: [heathermills.org](http://heathermills.org) and [vbites.com](http://vbites.com) or follow on social media:*

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## KEY TIPS FOR A HEALTHIER MIND

### GET A HEALTHY GUT

I believe focusing on a healthy gut will massively improve your moods. It is something I have tested and researched for years and increased whenever someone makes the change and effort in their lifestyle, the improvement and benefits are phenomenal.

### START YOUR MORNING RIGHT

Make having a morning probiotic on an empty stomach a way of life, as it will assist healthy gut flora. Wait at least 20 minutes after this before eating and never eat in a hurry or under stress – you will not chew your food enough or create enough saliva to prepare your stomach for digestion (which usually happens by naturally producing HCL and enzymes). I know that, in reality, life is stressful, so it's better when in a stressed environment to eat very lightly and save your meal for when you're somewhere calmer.

### ACE YOUR ALKALINE STATE

Study everything that helps keep your body in an alkaline state. An acidic body is a sure fire way to evoke unnecessary stress and negative effects on your mental wellbeing. Focus on eating alkaline foods, such as:

- Vegetables
- Pre-soaked nuts and seeds
- Beans and legumes
- Fermented foods such as sauerkraut and tempeh
- Moringa and gluten-free grains

And make sure to get out of seriously stressful environments as quick as humanly possible, as they'll put you in an immediate acidic state.

### LOOK AFTER YOUR MICROBIOMES

Microbiomes are key, so be sure to take care of them. The human microbiome is defined as the collection of microbes: bacteria, viruses, and single-cell eukaryotes, which inhabit the human body.

Basically, keeping your gut in homeostasis is key to mental wellbeing. Intestinal microbiota regulates this by improving your gut health and thus improving your immune function; when this is balanced, it will further improve your state of mind. A Harvard University study stated that eating a diet packed with meat and cheese altered the trillions of microbes in the gut, putting them into an inflamed state. This effect is linked to all kinds of serious diseases including cancer, heart disease and mental illnesses. The scientists also discovered behavioural changes when the volunteers changed from the meat and cheese diet to a plant-based diet.

### ALGAL OILS

Omega 3 is a vital ingredient to mental wellbeing. Long-chain omega 3 acids contain two key ingredients: EPA and DHA, also known as eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). They each do different things, so you need them both, especially for the brain.

Most people think that omega 3 comes from fish, but it actually comes from the algae the fish eat. So why eat the secondary source, which is destroying the marine ecosystem, when you can eat algae directly? There are plenty of omega 3-packed fish substitutes and even algae supplements that will help you get plenty of this essential nutrient.

Sauerkraut encourages your body to stay in an alkaline state



Balance your acid and alkaline levels

Seaweed is a source of both EPA and DHA acids

