

eBites

Summer 2019

Published by Vegetarian for Life, the advocacy and educational charity working on behalf of older vegetarians and vegans



Can diet prevent Alzheimer's and other conditions?

Specialist doctor shares her thoughts

PLUS:
[Foolproof
vegan baking
hacks](#)



[Long-term vegan shows power of plants](#)

The 63-year-old says: "There's a belief that vegans must be pale, weak and skinny; I'm hoping to show that the exact opposite can be true."



Welcome

Summer is finally here, and what better way to enjoy the sunshine (or avoid the rain) than with some fantastic recipes and food for thought from industry professionals?

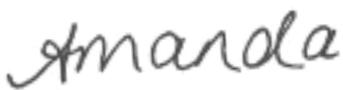
We recently spoke to the cover star for this issue – a 63-year-old long-term vegan whose doctor told his parents he wouldn't live past the age of 10 on a plant-based diet. He says he feels great, is thriving and that he proved the doctor wrong. Read more about this inspiring vegan on [page 4](#).

The Memory Care Pledge is an ongoing VfL campaign to help ensure that older vegans and vegetarians are catered for ethically while in care, especially if there is a loss of capacity. Karen Grant, whose vegetarian father was given meat in a care home, is backing the campaign. To read her story and more about the pledge, head to [page 5](#).

We reveal the findings of our recent survey that has shown a huge rise of vegans in care homes across the UK in the past 5 years. (See [page 3](#).)

Finally, we want to discover what the perfect meal-delivery service for older vegans and veggies would look like, and would really value your thoughts. Have your say by taking the survey on [page 3](#).

I hope that you enjoy the issue



Amanda Woodvine, Editor

Vegetarian for Life is an advocacy and educational charity working on behalf of older vegetarians and vegans throughout the UK.



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Reader exclusive

Award winning skincare brand H2k Skincare is offering one lucky winner a gift worth £24.99 – its luxury and eco-friendly Organic Lifestyle holiday partners. The prize comprises 100ml each of seakelp bath & shower gel, seakelp conditioning shampoo with aloe vera, and cucumber moisturising hand & body lotion. Two runners up will also receive one 100ml shower gel or body lotion.

H2k, based in Harrogate, was created in 2000 when managing director Hazel Barry introduced Kalahari Melon Seed Oil into skin care. Customers claim that the products have helped skin sensitivities.

The conscious skincare, and wellness brand states:

“Our values will not allow us to work in a way that exploits the environment so we put the environment at the heart of what we do, striving to create luxury products that are safe for you, safe for wildlife and are ethically sound.”

For your chance to win, answer this question: Where are H2k based? A) Manchester B) Harrogate C) Newcastle

Email info@vegetarianforlife.org.uk with your answer by midday 1 September.

Terms and conditions: To view the H2k range and for all enquiries visit h2kskincare.com. Three winners will be drawn at random from all entries received. One entry per household only. UK addresses only. There is no cash alternative.



Vegans in care homes treble

Vegan residents in UK care homes have almost TRIPLED during the past 5 years, according to new research.

Staggering figures released earlier this year show that residents following a vegan diet in UK residential care homes have risen by 167 per cent since 2014.

Vegetarian for Life commissioned the research, which took a representative sample of 1,000 care homes across the UK.

There are currently more than 11,000 care homes for older people in the UK. The total number of vegetarians and vegans combined is now estimated to be over 7,000, across both nursing and residential care. There are one or more vegetarians or vegans living in one in every five UK care homes.

The rapid rise in vegan residents in particular has sparked Vegetarian for Life to urge care facilities to be prepared if a vegan resident moves into their care.

Amanda Woodvine, Chief Executive at Vegetarian for Life, said there is more need than ever to ensure there are adequate vegan meal options available to those in care homes.

“It can be daunting for catering staff at care homes to plan meals if only one resident is plant-based. But VfL has a vast amount of resources available to make this as

easy as possible. There is a wealth of recipes on our website, including for special occasions such as birthdays and barbecues. We also offer fully-funded training, including live cooking demonstrations from our team of roving chefs.”

Vegetarian for Life has a dedicated UK List of more than 1,300 care homes that have pledged to cater well and ethically for older vegans or vegetarians in their care. Find out more and be a part by visiting vegetarianforlife.org.uk/uk-list/about

HAVE YOUR SAY: Vegan and vegetarian ready-prepared meals

Can you spare a few minutes to complete our survey? We need your help to shape the future of vegan and vegetarian ready-meals. We want to discover what the perfect meal-delivery service for older vegans and veggies would look like, and would really value your input.

To take the survey, please visit: surveymonkey.co.uk/r/DQ5CLQL

“Doctors told me I wouldn’t live past 10 if I continued eating a plant-based diet.”

Meet the 63-year-old long-term vegan whose doctor said he wouldn’t live past ten because of his plant-based diet.

Fitness fanatic John Machin decided in childhood he didn’t want to eat meat or dairy.

Doctors warned his parents that if he didn’t eat a standard diet he wouldn’t live past the age of ten.

But almost six decades later he is thriving and showing what is possible on a vegan lifestyle.

The energetic athlete spends 2 hours every day in the gym honing his strength and fitness. But you won’t find him lifting weights – he prefers using his own body weight to sculpt his muscles – otherwise known as calisthenics.

John, from Macclesfield, Cheshire, said: “There’s a belief that vegans must be pale, weak and skinny; I’m hoping to show that the exact opposite can be true. Being 63, I can also demonstrate that a life eating purely plant food offers lasting and quite spectacular physical results.

“I have been vegan since childhood. Back then, people like me were just known as fussy eaters. If my parents gave me anything from an animal such as meat or dairy, I felt disgusted; I couldn’t even consider eating it. I knew I’d be physically sick.

“This caused some consternation; and, at the age of five, I was gravely informed by our doctor that, unless I began eating meat and dairy, I wouldn’t live to see the age of ten. I think he got that one slightly wrong.”

Although he was vegan, John’s early diet consisted mainly of chips, baked beans and tinned peas; and, with an asthmatic childhood he wasn’t particularly healthy. So, as he reached his teenage years, he took an interest in fitness and nutrition – subjects he now teaches.

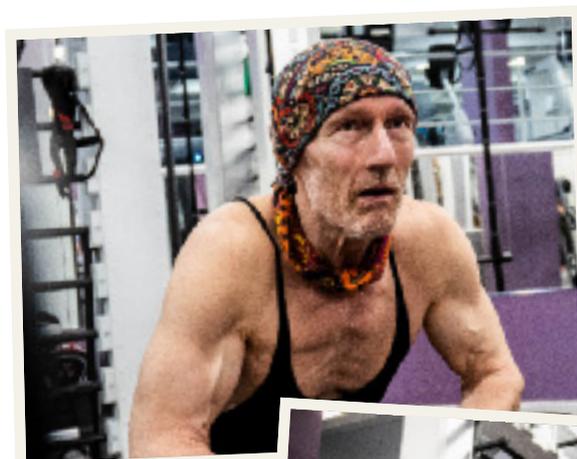
John, who worked as a writer for television shows such as *The Two Ronnies* and *Noel’s House Party* added: “I evolved from lifting weights to using my own body weight to train. It is a functional and much more effective way of strengthening every muscle in the body. Plant foods are ideal for health and fitness; they’re what we naturally thrive on. Now in my seventh decade, I have never been fitter or healthier. I love the vegan diet and training, and how they make me feel.”

John had been vegan for 50 years before he met his first, fellow vegan, so he finds the growth in veganism today as heart-warming as it is surprising.

He said: “It’s never been easier to be vegan, and with such a wealth of fabulous vegan food on the shelves, there are no longer any reasons not to try veganism. Just excuses.

“Veganism is better for our health, for the human race, for the planet, and – crucially – for our wonderful animals. I don’t preach about veganism anymore; pictures speak louder than words and I hope I’m visual proof that being vegan long-term is beneficial for not just our minds and our bodies, but also for our self-respect as a species.”

He said: “Vegetarian for Life is close to my heart because my mother had dementia, and spent her final years in a nursing home. Those with dementia may have lost their short-term memory, but they have not lost their self-respect. The beliefs they held before their illness must be respected, and ignoring the diet and lifestyle of those who made the courageous decision to avoid meat and/or dairy is as immoral as it is callous. So I support Vegetarian for Life’s Memory Care Pledge wholeheartedly.”



At Vegetarian for Life we are proud that more and more care homes are taking our Memory Care Pledge. The pledge is to ensure that all vegan and vegetarian residents are cared and catered for in line with their beliefs throughout their lives – even if there is a loss of capacity.

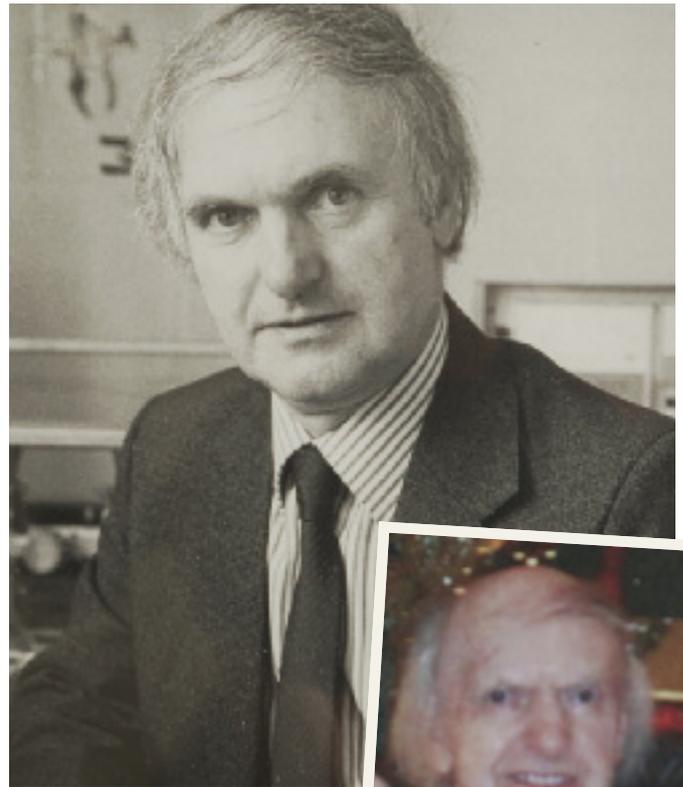
We recently spoke to Karen Grant who is backing the pledge after her vegetarian father was served meat while in a care home.

She tells of her devastation at the realisation of the incident and why she now wants all care homes to make a pledge.

Karen Grant, of Romiley, Stockport, was extremely close to her father and found it difficult when he had to go into care.

Douglas Grant had been vegetarian most of his life. He was diagnosed with dementia at the age of 85 and entered care.

Karen, 63, said: “My father went into a care home in Lancaster and it was in his notes that he was vegetarian. He had been for the majority of his life so it



“I want it made clear that if I have to go into a care home then I am not fed meat or dairy.”



was such a large part of his identity. He did it for health reasons because he was a chemistry professor. It was something he was really passionate about.

“I went to visit him one day and asked him what he had eaten. He replied and said ‘a ham sandwich’. I was utterly shocked at him saying this because I know he hadn’t eaten meat for 50 or 60 years. I said, ‘but Dad you’re a vegetarian, you don’t eat meat!’ But of course because of the dementia he couldn’t remember.



“I found that really distressing – not because he had eaten meat but because it was about the lack of respect for his identity. Seeing a loved-one, especially a parent

who you have looked up to all of your life, with dementia is difficult enough. So to know that one of the most fundamental parts about my dad (vegetarianism) had been forgotten or disregarded was distressing.

“It’s all to do with dignity and respect. But he sadly wasn’t in a position to communicate his wishes. I also didn’t feel in a position to complain because those people were looking after my dad – I wasn’t there 24/7 and I didn’t want it to affect the care he was getting.”

Douglas passed away in 2017 aged 87.

Ms Grant, who is vegan, has now made a Lasting Power of Attorney attesting her wishes.

She added: “I want it be made clear that if I have to go into a care home then I am not fed meat or dairy.”

If you know any older vegetarians and vegans who have been in a similar situation, please let us know by contacting Katie at katie@vegetarianforlife.org.uk or on 0161 257 0887.

Visit vegetarianforlife.org.uk/pages/pledge to find out more about the pledge.

Can diet prevent Alzheimer's?



“Mentioning diet has become almost politically incorrect.” Alicja Baczynska is a Specialist Registrar in Geriatric Medicine working in Wessex Deanery in the South of England. Here she

talks about the effects eating a plant-based diet has on a number of different health conditions.

Multiple conditions could potentially be prevented and/or alleviated by dietary changes¹.

Meanwhile, modern healthcare continues to focus on medicinal drugs (pharmaceuticals) and procedures – despite their obvious limitations and incapacity to reverse chronic diseases. Complex, non-communicable diseases with multifaceted pathology warrant a different approach – one in which lifestyle changes are a crucial foundation of the treatment, not an optional bonus.

In the practice of medicine across the country, we feel comfortable in the context of malnutrition and gladly recommend supplements, meat or eggs for protein and iron, milk and cheese for calcium or added butter/oil and cake to increase caloric intake in the hope of halting the progressive weight loss and ensuing frailty. But do we ever take the time to explore the bigger picture of nutrition science and how it relates to multimorbidity and frailty?

Looking closer at the concept of frailty, I cannot help pondering on the associations with poor dietary choices. Recent cohort studies show correlations of unhealthy dietary patterns with increased risk of frailty and dementia^{2,3}.

The list of deficits from which the frailty index is derived contains diet-related conditions: cerebrovascular disease, stroke, cognitive impairment, myocardial infarction, diabetes, hypertension, peptic ulcer, osteoporosis, and chronic kidney disease.

The suggested disordered physiological processes

underlying frailty include cellular and molecular damage from chronic inflammation, oxidative stress, hormonal changes, dyslipidaemia, insulin resistance, gut dysbiosis – all of which are powerfully influenced by diet.

Epidemiological studies clearly demonstrate that populations which traditionally follow plant-based diets have very low or non-existent rates of chronic diseases that in contrast are rampant in Western countries⁴.

You may have heard about Blue Zones⁵ – five places on Earth where people live very long and healthy lives with a high number of people aged 100 or above (centenarians). These are Okinawa in Japan, Loma Linda in California, Nicoya in Costa Rica, Ikaria in Greece, Ogliastra in Sardinia. These groups of people share a similar lifestyle with a diet based around fruits, vegetables, wholegrains and legumes (which resembles the traditional famous Mediterranean diet).

Patients’... lives have been completely transformed by the power of their plate

Plant-based whole food diets have been used successfully to reverse chronic diseases such as hypertension, coronary artery disease^{6,7}, type 2 diabetes⁸ and surprisingly, mild cognitive impairment and early Alzheimer's, too⁹. This wealth of evidence favouring a plant-based diet is supported by heart-warming stories of patients whose lives have been completely transformed by the power of their plate.

A healthy balanced diet has been promoted by the government and various organisations for years. Despite these efforts, our eating habits are nowhere near healthy with ever younger children being raised on high fat, high salt and high sugar, ultra-processed foods.

Unfortunately, as doctors we do not tend to be great role models to either our colleagues or patients – we indulge in highly processed junk food the same way as everybody else – chocolates, cakes and crisps being

ubiquitous on the wards. But geriatricians should know better – high sugar diets have been linked with dementia^{10,11}; Alzheimer’s disease has long been named type 3 diabetes for the highly damaging effects of insulin resistance and hyperglycaemia on brain neurons⁹.

We do not notice overweight and do not deal with obesity as much as other medical specialties (yet!) Nonetheless, it is not hard to imagine what medicine will look like when the current generation of young people raised on junk food will enter a phase of accelerated ageing.

So, at what point is it appropriate to educate patients about their diet? Hospital doctors mostly omit this issue and prefer to focus on the acute problem, assuming that the GP will be better placed to handle this ever present ‘elephant in the room’. Mentioning diet has become almost politically incorrect, an area that few hospital doctors venture to explore with patients in fear of stepping on the holy ground of personal choice and opinion, offending the patient, or not being able to offer any meaningful advice due to lack of sound, practical nutritional knowledge or motivational skills.

This is the time for a major change in how we think, talk and advise about food as well as in what we put on our own table. The revolution has already started and all healthcare professionals need to join in.

The recipe to the right is a delicious plant-based, high energy, high protein smoothie, which can be easily prepared using a high-speed blender. It contains beneficial plant protein, fibre, a multitude of vitamins and minerals, various phytonutrients with anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and anti-cancer properties and is of course super tasty. Substituting kale and mango for half an avocado and a handful of berries will give you a great brain-healthy option, too.



- 1 cup (250 ml) fortified soya milk
- 1 ripe banana
- A handful of frozen mango
- 2 large handfuls of spinach or kale
- 30g pumpkin seeds
- 30g flaxseeds
- Plant protein powder – optionally for malnourished patients (will add about 20 g protein per 30g serving)

Makes one large smoothie (500 mls = 580 kcal). Protein content is about 24g (without supplemented protein)

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Secrets of vegan baking revealed

You don't need to be vegan to try these incredible baking hacks – which are tasty and can be cheaper than their regular baking counterparts. Baking vegan cakes, muffins, tarts and meringues is simple – and your non-vegan relatives and friends are unlikely to even notice they are plant-based.

Vegetarian for Life Roving Chef, Maggie Lister, said: “Vegan baking has never been easier – most supermarkets now stock a large range of plant-based products, which means you can do like for like swaps with dairy products. For example, try plant-based spreads such as Pure, Vitalite or Flora. And a lot of pre-made pastry such as Jus-Rol is vegan by default.

“When it comes to cream, canned coconut milk is a great alternative to

heavy dairy creams. You could also make your own dairy-free whipped cream by whisking the creamy top from coconut milk. Add in vanilla extract and maple syrup for a tasty addition with authentic whipped cream taste.”

Here are Maggie's tips to replace egg specifically:

- Try replacing each egg used in baking with ripe mashed banana, 'no-egg', silken tofu, aquafaba or chia seeds.
- The function of an egg depends on its purpose in a certain dish, so recreating this process will need different approaches to baking.
- Banana will add extra moisture; great in loaf cakes and breads. Older bananas work best when baking so don't throw away the

mushy ones in your fruit bowl!

- Tofu is versatile because it can be used in sauces, cakes and savoury dishes and well in quiche and tarts. It's high in protein and can be bought calcium-set, which makes it a great alternative.
- Applesauce works well in cakes, cookies and biscuits but be careful it's not loaded with refined sugar.
- Aquafaba – the liquid from a drained can of chickpeas – is the perfect egg white replacement for meringues. Just whisk with sugar for some seriously stiff peaks, and bake in the usual way.
- Flaxseed mixed with water creates a glue-like consistency that works to bind ingredients together.

The Perfect Victoria Sponge

- 400g/13oz self-raising flour
- 1¼ tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 200g/7oz caster sugar
- 115ml/3 3/4oz sunflower oil
- 400ml/14fl oz dairy-free milk, such as oat or unsweetened soya
- 1 tbsp golden syrup
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 4 tbsp strawberry jam
- 150g/5oz strawberries, halved or quartered depending on size, to decorate

For the vegan buttercream:

- 200g/7oz dairy-free spread, plus extra for greasing
- 175g/6oz icing sugar, sifted
- 1 tsp lemon juice

- 1 Preheat oven to gas 4/180°C/fan 160°C. Grease and flour sides and line base of 2 x 23cm (9-inch) loose-bottomed cake tins.
- 2 Sift flour, bicarbonate of soda and sugar into a large mixing bowl and mix together.
- 3 In a jug, whisk together sunflower oil, milk, syrup and vanilla. Pour wet mixture into dry ingredients, then whisk using a hand-blender for 2 minutes until thick and creamy.
- 4 Spoon mixture into the prepared cake tins and bake for 35–45 minutes until risen and cooked through.



- 5 Remove from oven. Leave to cool in tin for 15 minutes. Remove and leave to cool completely on a wire rack.
- 5 While cakes cool, make the filling: beat together spread, icing sugar and lemon juice in a mixing bowl. Cover and leave to firm up in the fridge until needed.
- 6 Spread jam evenly over one half of the cake, followed by two-thirds of cream mixture. Top with second cake and spread remaining cream on top. Decorate with fruit.

Visit vegetarianforlife.org.uk/recipes for more recipes.