

■ FOOD

Diet to save the world

More fruit, nuts and vegetables and less meat, sugar and dairy will solve everything

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MANY diets promise to help you lose weight fast, but the new planetary health diet makes a bolder claim.

In a recent report published in *The Lancet*, researchers warn that our large population, combined with current dietary trends and food production, will lead to an increase in diseases, world hunger, and greenhouse gas emissions.

But they say a complete global overhaul of how we eat "can provide win-win diets to everyone by 2050 and beyond".

If everyone followed the planetary health diet, the researchers believe more than 11 million premature deaths could be prevented each year.

It would also decrease greenhouse gas emissions and more land, water and biodiversity would be preserved.

This diet promises "perfect" health for the planet and its population.

It claims that doubling your consumption of nuts, fruit, vegetables and legumes and halving your meat and sugar intake is the way to go.

But what is this planetary health diet? It's a diet that's symbolically represented by half a plate of fruit, vegetables and nuts.

The other half consists primarily of wholegrains, plant proteins, beans,



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lentils, pulses, unsaturated plant oils, modest amounts of meat and dairy, and some added sugars and starchy vegetables.

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One beef burger and two servings of fish a week is recommended, but most of the protein comes from pulses

and nuts.

A glass of milk a day, or some cheese or butter, fits within the guidelines of the diet, as does an egg or two a week.

Half of each plate of food in this diet is vegetables and fruit, and a third is wholegrain cereals.

The planetary health diet resembles those eating plans already known to

be healthy, such as the Mediterranean or Okinawa diets, the researchers say.

A lecturer at North-West University and a spokesperson for the Association for Dietetics in South Africa, Dr Mariaan Wicks, said: "The planetary health diet offers an incredible variety of plant-based foods and there are excellent sources of plant proteins that provide complete amino acid requirements.

Getting used to eating less meat, eggs and dairy doesn't mean we won't be eating delicious meals.

"Every little change can make a big difference," said Wicks. "Start with easy changes and, as you become more comfortable, add new changes."

The benefits of the diet are not limited to health, it is good for the environment as well.

Dietitian Monique Piderit from Natural Solutions said the increasing demand for food from a growing human population and a challenged food system that is already stressed by the degradation of global ecosystems, are some of the reasons why such diets are gaining popularity.

Piderit said consumers are becoming increasingly interested in provenance and the environmental impact of their food, but taste and cost remain the strongest factors that influence food choice.