

# Dr. Barnard's Research on Diabetes Prevention & Treatment via a Plant-based Diet

by Sandy Pukel

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, more than one hundred million adults in the United States are currently living with diabetes or prediabetes. People who suffer from diabetes are at an increased risk of serious health complications, including heart disease, stroke, vision loss, and amputation of toes, feet or legs, among other illnesses. Diabetics often rely on treatment plans that include a “diabetes diet” low in sugar and carbohydrates along with two or three different medications and/or insulin injections. Doctors, dietitians and nurses say it’s a one-way street and never goes away.

Based on recent extensive research, Neal Barnard, MD, FACC, would disagree. A leader in nutrition and research, Barnard is president and founder of both the nonprofit Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine and the Barnard Medical Center. His book, *Dr. Neal Barnard's Program for Reversing Diabetes* (2008), outlines a completely new dietary approach to preventing, controlling and even reversing diabetes. It calls for a low-fat, vegan diet. The results have been transformational.

## Beyond Carb Counting

A couple of scientific discoveries turned on its head the idea that diabetes was only a progressive disease. One observation looked at cultures around the world where diabetes is not epidemic. Diabetes is rare in many Asian countries, including Japan, China and Thailand and in many parts of Africa. Noodles and rice are high in carbohydrates, so it seemed that carbs (which turn to sugar) were not the issue as was previously thought.

The second discovery came from looking inside the cell and how insulin allows glucose to get into the muscle cell. When insulin isn't functioning properly, it's because there are



intramyocellular lipids (fats within the cell) that interfere with insulin's ability to work and signal glucose coming in. In his book, Barnard writes: “The inescapable fact is that the problem is not carbohydrates (that is, sugar and starch). The problem is in how the body processes them. If we can repair your body's ability to absorb and use carbohydrates, not only can you enjoy healthy carbohydrate-rich foods without worry, but diabetes itself ought to improve—perhaps even go away.”

## Simply Set Animal Products Aside

In 2003, the National Institutes of Health—the research branch of the U.S. government—provided a grant that would fund a new study for Barnard and his clinical research team at the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine. The results of this study would later be accepted by the American Diabetes Association as one approach to addressing this disease.

If fat is an issue, then what happens when the diet has no fat in it? The study involved 99 people with type 2 diabetes. They were asked to follow a low-fat vegan diet with no restriction on the amount of carbohydrates or calories. Participants were advised to do the following: (1) avoid animal products; (2) keep vegetable oils to a minimum; and (3) favor low-glycemic-index carbohydrates (e.g., rye or pumpernickel bread rather than wheat bread; sweet potatoes rather than white potatoes; oatmeal rather than cold cereals). These

participants saw amazing results that baffled many of their doctors.

Barnard says the genes for diabetes are suggestions (not dictations). What we must put into our bodies are foods that we are designed to eat—and animal fat is not one of them. Humans are naturally herbivores. Barnard offers one piece of evidence for this argument: “Cats and dogs have long canine teeth that allow them to capture and kill prey. Our canines are no longer than our incisors, and that change occurred at least three million years ago.”

Americans eat about one million animals per hour, but with the increase in public awareness of the benefits of plant-based lifestyles, we are seeing the numbers change. Through simple diet changes, we will be able to live longer, happier and better lives.

## Learn During an Educational Vacation

For about a decade now, Barnard has presented on Holistic Holiday at Sea, a Caribbean cruise where education meets vacation. The 10-day voyage to well-being stops at exotic ports-of-call and offers a full schedule of socials, movement classes and presentations and sessions with leaders in the plant-based movement including doctors, nutritionists, practitioners of complementary modalities of healing and animal advocates.

On the upcoming Holistic Holiday at Sea cruise, February 15-25, 2018, Barnard will present the lecture, An Intensive Plant-Based Diet for Diabetes Management. He will highlight how recent research has shown that diabetes can be controlled and even reversed by following a few basic principles and making simple lifestyle adjustments.

*Neal Barnard, M.D., is author of “Food for Life and Power Foods for the Brain”. For more information on Holistic Holiday at Sea, see ad on back cover.*