

Is meatless 'meat' really healthier? What customers should know

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By David Zinczenko

If it looks like a burger, cooks like a burger and even tastes like a burger, it must be a burger, right? Well, not anymore.

"Burgers," made with plant-based ingredients have been taking the place of meat in grocery stores and fast food chains. The Beyond Burger — which Carl's Jr. incorporated into its menu — and the Impossible Burger, adapted by Burger King as a new Whopper patty, are two examples of the alternatives out there.

And unlike the fake meats in the vegan section, the newest plant-based options are found in the meat aisle at your local supermarket. That's right, the meat aisle! These companies aren't just making food for vegans and vegetarians — they're coming after meat lovers.

Currently, Americans eat a lot of red meat. According to the USDA, the average American ate 222.4 pounds of red meat in 2018; that's equal to 890 quarter-pound burgers (or 2.4 burgers a day). The World Cancer Research Fund recommends eating no more than three 4-ounce portions a week. That means folks are eating more than five times the amount of red meat experts recommend as part of a healthy diet.

Research from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services found a diet including red meat causes health problems, including increased risk of cancer, heart disease, cardiovascular disease, obesity and high cholesterol levels.

Evidence generally indicates that avoiding beef is a good idea, particularly for people who are at a higher risk for cardiovascular disease or certain types of cancers.

On the other hand, other protein sources — including those from plants — could help you live longer, making these faux meat options a great way to get the taste you love without impacting your well-being.

There is one additional argument in support of opting for plant-based meats: environmental responsibility. Harvard researchers note that there is an "urgent need to reduce meat and dairy consumption" and that "getting protein from plant sources instead of animal sources would drastically help in meeting climate targets." According to the International Livestock Research Institute, livestock farming — cows, pigs and chickens, among other animals — used 45% of Earth's land surface and contributed to more than 18% of global greenhouse gases in 2011. In other words, your hamburger ends up as a hotter planet.

Plant-based companies can produce a burger with a fraction of the water, land and greenhouse gases of a conventional burger. Beyond Meat claimed it produces 14 Beyond Burgers with the same amount of land it takes to produce one beef burger.

Unit 1, Reading and Vocabulary Focus 2 Final Handout

Please write answers on your own paper. Handwriting or typing is both OK!

Write in complete sentences.

- 1) Write a different title for this reading.
- 2) What is the main idea of the reading? Write at least one complete sentence.
- 3) Write two advantages of plant-based “meat.”
- 4) Write at least one thing you found interesting in the reading.