

most people need between seven and nine hours of sleep to function well. If you regularly average less than seven hours, then you have an increased risk of depression, diabetes, and heart problems. But sleeping for more than nine hours a night has also been associated with an increase in health issues. So eight hours a night is probably about right, though a bit more or a bit less shouldn't do you any harm.

On to exercise. You've probably heard that the recommended amount of exercise is a minimum of half an hour's moderate activity five times a week. But even if you're doing the recommended amount, it may not be enough if you then drive to work and sit at a computer all day. A review by the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* said that an average of 30 minutes daily may not prevent unhealthy weight gain in many people. The message? Do the recommended amount of moderate activity, but try to do more if you can, especially if you spend a lot of the day sitting down.

And finally, we all know how addicted our kids are to anything with a screen. But given the amount of panic there is about children watching TV, playing computer games or going online, there is surprisingly little research into the long-term effects of screen time. So, should we limit screen time to protect our children's physical or emotional health? It's a difficult question to answer. Obviously sitting down for too long is as bad for children as it is for adults, but a large-scale UK study of 11,000 children showed no relationship between screen time and emotional or social problems, or an inability to concentrate or make friends. So while the internet may be changing how our brains work, the idea of limiting screen time to two hours a day isn't supported by research. Instead we should make up our own minds about what's best for our children – and for ourselves.

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I was, I was travelling back from Spain to the UK. I was with my family, with my wife and two young children, it was two days before Christmas, and we were travelling back to London to visit my family there. It was an evening flight, I think the flight left around 10 o'clock, and it was leaving from Valencia. The weather there was really good, but just before we were going to take off, I was just reading my, you know, the messages at the last minute and I saw there was a message from my brother, so I read it, and he was asking me whether the flight had been cancelled, because he said in the message that there was a very, very bad storm in London with gale force winds. I sent a message back to him saying, well, no, actually we're just taking off, but obviously it made me wonder what the weather was going to be like when we got there.

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It was a two-hour flight, everything was normal, until we got to Gatwick. As we were approaching Gatwick the pilot came on and he said, 'I'm sorry, we can't land yet because there's really bad weather here, so we're going to circle for a while.' So the plane started circling, and then we started getting the worst turbulence I've ever, ever experienced. The plane just seemed to be going up in the air, then dropping, then rising up again and then dropping. And this went on for about 20 minutes. Then the pilot obviously decided he was going to have a go at landing, but as he got nearer and nearer to the ground, the wind just got stronger and stronger, and the plane was being knocked around, and I really thought 'This is it, we're going to crash'.

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Just at the very last moment, the pilot obviously realized that it was impossible to land and he changed his mind and the plane suddenly shot back up in the air and this was a really scary moment and a lot of people on the plane they sort of gasped in alarm. The plane started gaining height, the pilot didn't say anything, and when we finally got up, well, really high again then he came on and he said, 'I'm very sorry, but I just couldn't land, it was too windy, and I'm afraid we can't land at Gatwick now because the airport's been closed. In fact I have to tell you that we can't land anywhere in the UK because all the airports are closed.' Everyone on the plane was sort of looking at each other and I think we were all thinking, 'So where are we going to land? Have we got enough petrol to land somewhere else?'

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Well, then the pilot said, 'Fortunately, Amsterdam airport has said we can land there, so we're off to Holland now. Then we had a two-hour journey to Holland, that was OK, fairly calm, fairly normal, and then as we came in to land at Amsterdam, the pilot warned us, he said 'It's going to be windy here too, but not as bad as at Gatwick,' and it was quite a good landing, little bit bumpy, and everyone was very, very relieved to get down on the ground, in fact, all the passengers applauded. And we all started getting up, to be honest we couldn't wait, you know, to get off, to get our feet on firm ground again.

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But then, just as we were getting all our things from the overhead locker, one of the cabin crew got on the loudspeaker and he said, 'Well no, no, don't get off because what's happening now, is we're going to refuel, and then we're going to fly back to Gatwick. We're going to have another try, because we think that in a couple of hours, the weather should be better at Gatwick. And he said, if you want to get off, you can get off, but there won't be a hotel for you, because this plane's going back to Gatwick.'

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So then everyone had a bit of a dilemma, and in fact what happened was that pretty well everyone who had children, all the parents, there were a lot of children on the plane, because it was Christmas, pretty well everyone who had children got off the plane and the others stayed on. We were really happy to get off that plane and we spent the night in Amsterdam airport, and then in the morning we got a train from Amsterdam to Belgium. In Brussels, we picked up the Eurostar, and that took us through France, under the Channel, and back to London. So, after travelling all day, we finally got home around seven o'clock in the evening, just in time for the children to hang up their stockings for Christmas. Definitely the most frightening experience I've ever had.

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John Good afternoon, and welcome to The Food Programme, where each week we debate issues related to food. In this week's debate, and some people may think this is very overdue, the subject is 'Being vegetarian'. Should we or shouldn't we be giving up meat? With me today in the studio are Abby Fisher, from an online newspaper about vegetarian issues, and Dr Mark Carol, a nutritionist. Before we start the debate, let me just clarify that we are just debating about not eating meat, not giving up fish and dairy too, or going vegan. Abby, you have the floor, to propose that we should all give up meat.

Abby Thank you, John. People are drawn to vegetarianism by all sorts of motives. Some of us want to live longer, healthier lives, or do our part to reduce pollution. Others of us have made the switch because we want to preserve the Earth's natural resources, or because we've always loved animals and are ethically opposed to eating them. I'm going to focus on three clear reasons for giving up meat.

Firstly, for your health. I think it's pretty generally accepted that vegetarian diets are healthier than the average UK diet. It's estimated that 70 percent of all diseases, including one third of all cancers, are related to diet. A vegetarian diet reduces the risk for diseases such as obesity, coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and certain types of cancer. Being a vegetarian also means being slimmer, which as we all know, means being healthier. In a recent study where overweight people followed a low-fat, vegetarian diet they lost an average of 12 kilos in the first year and, by sticking to a vegetarian diet, had kept off that weight five years later. You'll also live longer – according to other studies, vegetarians live on average 13 years longer than meat eaters.

Now, let's move on to pollution. Many people have become vegetarians after they realized the devastation that the meat industry is having on the environment. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, chemical and animal waste from factory farms – that is, farms which keep large numbers of animals, and usually in terrible conditions – this waste is responsible for more than 173,000 miles of polluted

rivers and streams and it's one of the greatest threats to water quality today. So by stopping eating meat, you'll help to reduce pollution, especially water pollution.

My third main argument is cost. If you give up meat, you'll save money. Meat accounts for 10% of food spending in the UK. If you start eating vegetables, grains, and fruits instead of the 84 kilos of meat and chicken each non-vegetarian eats per year, you'll cut individual food bills right down – some people have calculated by an average of £2,000 a year.

So, to sum up, stopping eating meat will improve your health, will reduce pollution, and will save you money. So rather than asking yourself, 'Why go vegetarian?', the real question is, 'Why haven't you gone vegetarian already?'

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John Thank you very much, Abby. And now it's the turn of Dr Mark Carol to oppose these arguments. Mark, over to you.

Mark Well, let me deal with those arguments one by one. I'll start with the area which is obviously my speciality, and that's health. While there is some evidence that eating too much meat can negatively affect your health, the vast majority of research suggests that a well-balanced omnivorous diet, that is, a diet which includes all the main food groups, is a far healthier choice. Studies have repeatedly shown that vegetarians who don't supplement their diets with Vitamin D, B12, and iron are prone to becoming anaemic. And I know we're just talking about non-meat eaters, but vegetarians who don't eat fish either also typically miss out on Omega-3 fatty acids which are essential, not just for our physical well-being, but also potentially help with depression and some personality disorders. And I'd also like to mention that research at Oxford University recently followed 35,000 individuals aged from 20 to 89 for a period of five years and discovered that vegans are 30% more likely to break a bone than meat eaters.

Now, as for the environmental argument, yes, many vegetarians argue that meat production harms the environment. But what they don't tell you – and of course they must know this – is that fruit and vegetable farming has just as severe environmental implications. The vast majority of non-organic farms still use pesticides and insecticides that kill off just as many beneficial predators as pests, so have a negative effect on our ecosystems. These dangerous chemicals also frequently get into water supplies... and talking of water, you need vast amounts of it to grow vegetables commercially, and this can cause water shortages and, in extreme cases, drought. And one final point – bear in mind that vegetarians also produce more gas than meat-eaters. The problem lies in the human body's inability to fully digest the complex carbohydrates in the vegetarian diet, which results in higher production of gases like hydrogen, carbon dioxide, and methane. People may laugh, but it's no laughing matter, I assure you.

Finally, the argument about cost. Well, I have to say that this argument really doesn't hold water. I'm not sure where Ms... Abby got her statistics from, but it's a well-known fact that one of the reasons why people in the UK don't eat enough fruit and vegetables, by which I mean at least five portions a day, is because of the cost of fresh fruit and vegetables in this country. Meat and poultry prices have hardly gone up at all during the last few years, whereas the price of fruit and vegetables has skyrocketed, and many people say they simply can't afford to eat their five portions a day. So the argument that going vegetarian will save you money – well, it's just not an argument at all.

I'd like to sum up by saying that of course the main reason why we should all eat meat in moderation is that human beings are omnivores, and that means that we eat everything. Carnivores, like lions and tigers, don't suddenly start eating grass, and herbivores like sheep or goats, don't suddenly start eating meat. Omnivores should continue to have a balanced diet, which, as I said earlier, should cover all the main food groups.

John Thanks very much, Mark. Now, Abby, I'm sure you have more to say and react to what Mark has just said...