

» CONTENTS

- 6 Your Technology**
Fact-Check the Internet
- 10 Real Teens**
I Am Leo
- 16 Your Life**
Am I the Jerk?
- 22 Changemaker**
Fighting for Mental Health Awareness
- 24 Backpage**
Be a Mental Health Ally

Vocabulary

There are 27 tricky vocabulary words throughout this issue underlined in blue. Can you find them all? Go to Choices Online for activities to help you master these words.

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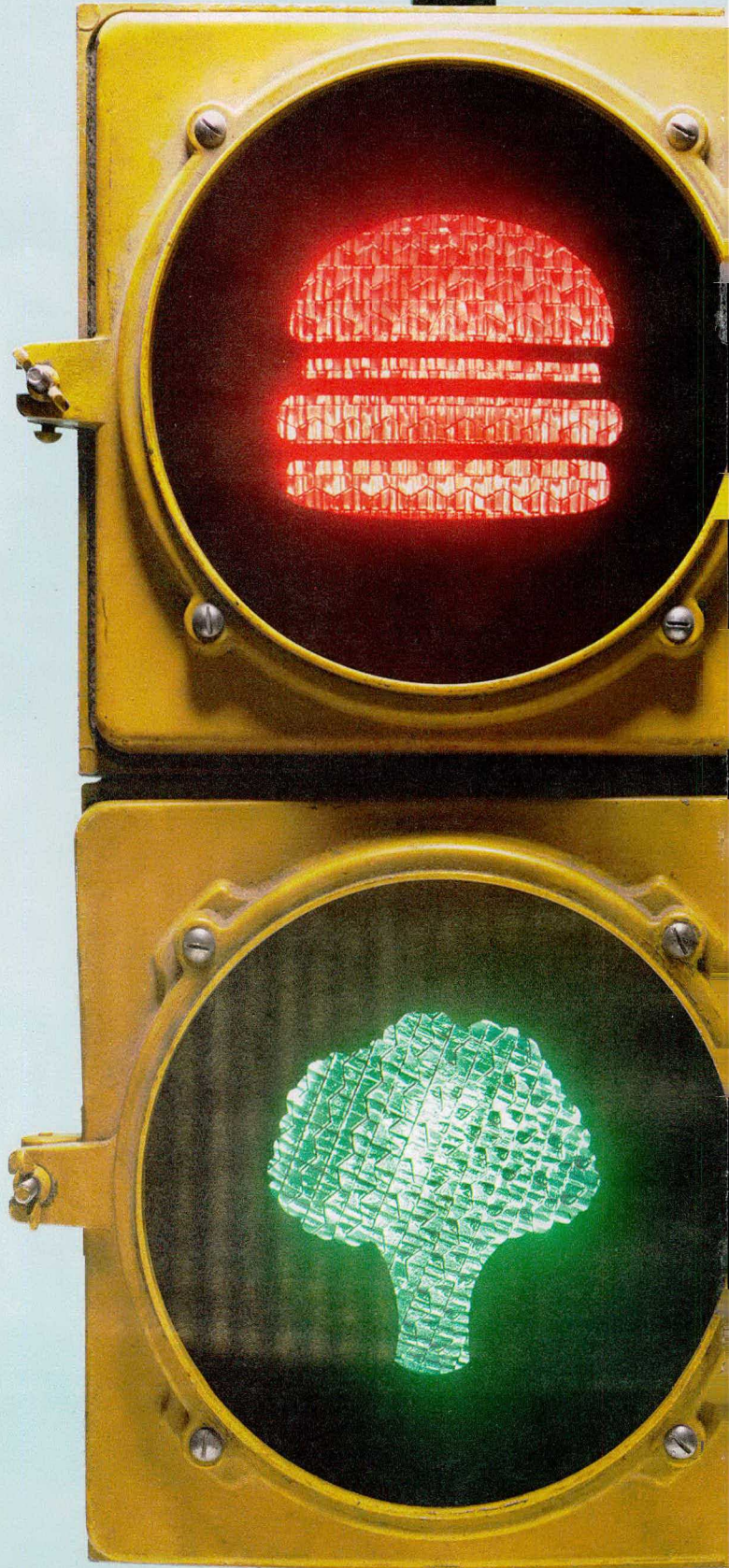
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Should Schools



Take Meat Off the Menu?

Eating a plant-based diet can be both good for your body and the planet. Since schools serve almost 31 million meals a day, could vegetarian-only cafeterias improve public health and help stop climate change?

YES

“Cafeterias should stop serving meat.”

*Jared Leonard,
a high school sophomore
in Connecticut*



NO

“Kids should have the choice to eat meat.”

*Olivia Meyer,
a high school senior
in Illinois*



It's time for school cafeterias to stop serving meat. Not only would this move make students healthier, it would also introduce them to a variety of nutritious, plant-based foods. Plus, it's a surefire way to help schools reduce their carbon footprint—the amount of carbon dioxide released into the air because of their energy needs.

Schools should empower students with options that will help them make healthy food →

I'm a firm believer in the saying “Everything in moderation.” Taking meat off school menus is just too drastic and would deny students the ability to choose what diet works best for them.

If schools stopped serving meat altogether, students who depend on cafeteria meals might be deprived of an essential part of a balanced diet: protein. According to OnHealth.com, protein “builds, maintains, and repairs body tissue and is especially →

TRAVIS RATHBONE/TRUNK ARCHIVE (TRAFFIC LIGHT); COURTESY OF FAMILY (JARED LEONARD); COURTESY OF FAMILY (OLIVIA MEYER)

YES (continued) choices. If schools stopped serving meat, students might be more inclined to try vegetarian options. That, in turn, would go a long way toward improving students' overall health. The Cleveland Clinic reports that plant-based meals are rich in fiber and low in saturated fat and cholesterol. Kids who consume a diet rich in these foods are less likely to develop health problems like heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity.

There are also compelling environmental reasons for eliminating meat in schools. According to the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization, the meat industry is responsible for 18 percent of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. This makes livestock farming more destructive to the atmosphere—and a bigger contributor to climate change—than all the cars, trucks, trains, and planes that make up the global transportation industry.

“Students might be more inclined to try vegetarian options.”

Producing foods such as whole grains, soy, nuts, beans, and produce, however, is much less damaging to the environment.

To replace meat, schools should serve some of the many delicious foods that can mimic its taste, such as cauliflower or tofu, as well as protein-rich staples like chickpeas and lentils. That way, students who like meat would have mouthwatering, plant-based alternatives.

More than 31 million children benefit from the government-supported school lunch program each day, but there is no law saying schools have to provide vegetarian options. This means that in some schools, kids don't have the opportunity to make the healthy and environmentally conscious decision to eat less meat. Taking meat off the menu altogether would result in healthier students and a more environmentally conscious generation of Americans.

NO (continued) important for growth.” It can also help students stay active and strong, which is critical for student athletes who are fueling up at lunch so they can perform at their best.

Many foods contain protein—meat, eggs, beans, nuts, seeds—but not all supply the full array of amino acids like meat does. According to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, animal products provide the highest quality protein. The U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends that kids eat approximately five ounces of protein a day. I believe students should be given the choice as to how they fulfill this requirement.

Some might argue that schools should eliminate meat because its production is harmful to the environment. To address this, schools could reduce the amount of meat they serve by participating in

“Taking meat off school menus is just too drastic.”

“Meatless Mondays,” where they serve only plant-based meals once a week. The rest of the time, schools ought to increase their offerings of fruits and vegetables so students have balanced options.

Buying more produce might be more expensive, but to help cover costs, schools could spend less on junk food. By making whole foods more available in schools, students would be immersed in an environment that encourages healthy eating and that would benefit them and the environment.

School lunches are a key component of most students' diets in America, and we need to make sure they contain the best ingredients possible. Students should be able to count on their school to provide them with access to a variety of healthy food options. Removing meat completely would take one of those options away.

What's the Matter With Meat?

How your food choices impact the planet

1 Americans Eat a Lot of Meat.*

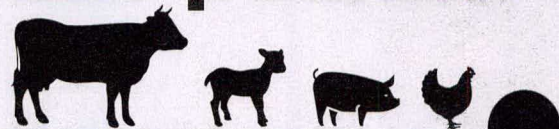
5 ounces per day ▶ amount of meat nutritionists recommend for a healthy diet

10 ounces per day ▶ amount Americans actually consume

*Meat = beef, lamb, pork, and poultry

How much meat will the average American eat this year?

228 pounds!



2 Keeping up with this demand hurts the environment. Why?

Raising livestock depletes natural resources.

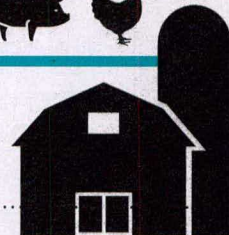
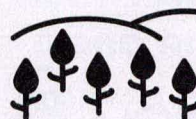
To make just one quarter-pound hamburger, it takes:

6.7
Pounds of grains and forage (grass or hay) for feed

52.8
Gallons of water

74.5
Square feet of land for grazing and growing food crops

1,036
BTUs of energy for feed production and transport



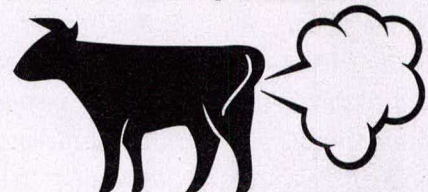
It also contributes to global warming.

9% of greenhouse gases produced in the U.S. come from meat production

5.5% come from transporting feed, animals, and meat across the country



3.5% come from methane gases produced when cows breathe, burp, fart, and poop (ew!)



3 What can you do NOW to help reduce your carbon footprint?



Go meatless every Monday!
If a family of four skips red meat one day per week, it's like taking your car off the road for 5 weeks!

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