



## David Fairlamb THE FIT FACTOR

### LIFESTYLE CHANGE

Adding protein to your diet and reducing carbs can be hugely positive in reducing body fat – why not try adding some plant protein such as pulses and tofu to your shopping list?

### FITNESS TIP

Research shows plant-based protein may be better for performance – maybe it's time to try something new and see how you feel.

Don't miss David's tips every Saturday in your Journal

**D**URING January, for research purposes, I decided to go vegan, cut out caffeine and any alcohol. I monitored the changes I experienced on a daily basis.

All my adult life I have predominantly eaten a high animal protein-based diet, and in veganism, you also steer clear of dairy products. It is commonly believed that vegans find it hard to find ample protein sources for consumption. The absence of meat and dairy may limit their choices but research now shows plants are arguably the best source of protein and plant-based diets might even be better for peak performance.

Here are just a few of my thoughts after one month on a vegan diet:

#### Positives

■ Increased energy – Although I never struggle with day-to-day energy, I thought on a plant-based diet and no coffee I thought I may struggle and feel lethargic, absolutely not. ■ Even getting up some days at 4.30am, my energy levels stayed constantly high and I experienced no drops at any time during the day. This, I believe, is due to zero caffeine

and no refined sugar.

■ Clearer mind – I felt I could focus more clearly. When I do motivational talks I would often have a coffee beforehand thinking it would help, I now know that it is certainly not needed.

■ Fitness levels – due to my workload I have not been able to train every day as I planned, however, my body composition still improved and recorded higher lean weight, water levels and muscle mass while my body fat dropped slightly.

■ Regular aches – one of the main reasons I followed the vegan diet was the research which says the anti-inflammatory effects within the body can be significantly better than a meat based diet. I have noticed an improvement with my ongoing back

and Achilles tendons injuries which is very positive.

■ Sleeping – I slept better and woke up fresher throughout the month.

■ New foods – it has been brilliant to try some new foods and other foods in much higher quantities than I am used to. I have also been pleasantly surprised at how good they taste eg Tofu, leeks, pulses, variety of meat alternatives.

#### Negatives

■ Bloating – my stomach was uncomfortably bloated, but this is to be expected as my body was dealing with a whole new diet. However, I did notice it was definitely worse with specific meat replacements.

■ Training recovery – I always train hard and push myself hard, but first thing in the morning after training I have felt more achy, however, it did seem to ease off quickly.

■ Shopping – some supermarkets are very limited in their vegan section and also lack any form of quick snacks. You have to be very organised where you can get the best selection, Sainsbury's I found to have the widest choice.

*Life begins at the  
end of your  
comfort zone*

**Motivational quote  
of the day**

#### > A vegan diet could help maintain energy levels



#### Summary

As long as I have food that I can eat and it is healthy, I'm happy, therefore to discipline myself this month has been pretty easy – it's just a case of staying focused and organised. I have enjoyed trying new foods and feeling brighter and experiencing fewer specific aches from long term injuries.

Although my fully vegan experience was only for one month, I have

learnt a great deal and I will be continuing with much more plant-based foods from now on, including sourcing more of my daily protein from plants.

While no one diet is right for everyone, experts agree that plants can be a great source of protein, even for serious athletes.

Remember, I did not follow a vegan diet for weight loss, only for research purposes.