

Flexitarian Diets and Health: A Review of the evidence-Based Literature

Flexitarian refers to an individual who follows a primarily but not strictly vegetarian diet, occasionally eating meat or fish. Despite the global demands for meat, there are growing numbers of flexitarians. Research from NatCen's British Social Attitudes survey found that 29% of people in Britain have reduced the amount of meat that they ate in the past 12 months. Women (39%) were most likely to reduce their meat intake. While research on vegetarianism, low meat diets and health is available, little is reported on flexitarianism. The aim of this paper is to review the evidence of flexitarian diets and their impact on health.

25 articles were included in the review following selection. There was emerging evidence suggestive of benefits for body weight, metabolic health, blood pressure and reduced risk of type 2 diabetes. Furthermore, it is suggested flexitarian diets could be useful for helping those with high meat intake to align with recommended dietary guidelines. Across the studies reviewed, flexitarians were typically educated females.

Overall, there is emerging evidence suggesting flexitarian diets have health benefits. The author suggests there is a need to communicate these benefits to males who are more likely to eat diets higher in red and processed meat. It is considered that flexitarian diets can meet dietary preferences, and improve public health outcomes.

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