

Canada Beef releases a bi-monthly Nutrition Journal Tracker as a summary report of health/nutrition research published that is of significance for beef.

<b>TOPIC</b>	Mental Health
<b>ARTICLE</b>	Meat and mental health: a systematic review of meat abstinence and depression, anxiety, and related phenomena
<b>CITATION</b>	Urska Dobersek, Gabrielle Wy, Joshua Adkins, Sydney Altmeyer, Kaitlin Krout, Carl J. Lavie & Edward Archer (2020) Meat and mental health: a systematic review of meat abstinence and depression, anxiety, and related phenomena, <i>Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition</i> , DOI: 10.1080/10408398.2020.1741505
<b>LINK</b>	<a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/10408398.2020.1741505">https://doi.org/10.1080/10408398.2020.1741505</a>
<b>SIGNIFICANCE</b>	Multiple research studies from countries around the world demonstrate vegetarians/vegans are at a greater risk of depression, anxiety, and self-harm.

## SUMMARY

- Systematic search of online databases examined psychological health in meat-consumers and meat-abstainers. Inclusion criteria were the provision of a clear distinction between meat-consumers and meat-abstainers, and data on factors related to psychological health.
- Eighteen studies met the inclusion/exclusion criteria; representing 160,257 participants (85,843 females and 73,232 males) with 149,559 meat-consumers and 8,584 meat-abstainers (11 to 96 years) from multiple geographic regions (Europe, Asia, North America, Oceania).
- Eleven of the 18 studies demonstrated that meat-abstinence was associated with poorer psychological health, four studies were equivocal, and three showed that meat-abstainers had better outcomes. The methodologic rigour assessment of the latter three studies found severe risk of bias, very low rigour and poor confidence in results.
- The most rigorous studies demonstrated that the prevalence or risk of depression and anxiety were significantly greater in participants who avoided meat consumption than meat consumers: depression and anxiety were 15% and more than 50% higher, respectively, in vegetarians than non-vegetarians in one study and another found 28.4% of meat-abstainers had symptoms of depression compared to 16.2% of meat-consumers.
- Vegetarians were two to three times more likely to think about or perform self-harm behaviours, for example, suicide.
- Based on this systematic review there is clear evidence that meat-abstinence is associated with higher rates or risk of depression, anxiety, and self-harm. However, the evidence linking vegetarianism with mental disorders is not unequivocal nor causal.
- With respect to clinical practice, the avoidance of meat may be a behavioural marker that signifies poorer mental health.
- A significant number of vegans and vegetarians return to meat consumption over time. The transition from meat-abstainer back to meat-consumer could be motivated by biological drive for better nutrition, challenges living in a Western society or the novelty wears off.
- It is well-established that vegetarianism may be used as a strategy to mask disordered eating and that vegetarianism is highest in females with severe eating disorders.
- While some studies suggest a reduction in mortality associated with vegetarianism, the larger body of evidence suggests that the health benefits associated with vegetarianism may not be due to the avoidance of meat per se, but other "lifestyle" factors associated with socio-economic status, such as adequate levels of physical activity, low alcohol and drug consumption, or the avoidance of tobacco products.
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