

LIFE

Carefully research meat alternatives

Many people who have had COVID, even without symptoms, experience fatigue. Plan and pace yourself to prepare healthy foods and slowly build your physical activity endurance to help your recovery. Ask a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist to help make sure you are getting all the needed nutrients.



KATHY KOLASA

My friends are asking me to join them in plant-based eating. Will eating plant-based proteins give me the same nutrition as eating meat? SK, Greenville

From time to time we will tell you about what is being called the “alt protein market.” This market includes plant-based protein products that are meant to appeal to meat eaters. There is another category of products that are “cell cultured,” referring to meat that is grown in a lab using cells from animals. The cell cultured process is still being streamlined for mass consumption, so today Morgan Skwara, an ECU dietetics major, will focus on the plant-based protein products that some of you are already eating.

Plant based meat alternatives are designed to mimic real animal product meat products like sausage, burgers, meatballs, and bacon. Food companies are working hard to make these alternative protein products have the taste, texture, look and smell of meat while avoiding animal ingredients.

Most are made from soy products like tofu or tempeh and other legumes, or vegetable proteins from peas. Some are made from grains like quinoa, and many include wheat gluten, also known as seitan. If you have any food allergies or sensitivities, you should read the ingredient labels carefully, as these are ultra-processed foods that may incorporate ingredients that you would otherwise want to avoid to get desired flavors and textures of meat.

One branded product is Quorn, which contains almost 90 percent mycoprotein from a type of fungus. Egg white is added to the standard version but there also is a vegan product. There have been reports that some people experience nausea, vomiting and hives when eating it.

There are many reasons why some people are choosing meat substitutes like these. It may be for health reasons, concerns about the environment and animals and/or the sustainability of the world's food supply. We have friends that say, if you are doing this for health reasons, just learn to eat plant foods in their natural state!

There is not a simple answer to your question. You need to read the

Nutrition Facts label to understand what nutrients you are getting and think about what you would have been getting with meat. Sometimes the meat product has more nutrition and sometimes the plant-based product does.

I looked at a burger product made from pea protein that had about 230 calories, while a pre-packaged brand of ground beef patties had 240 calories. The total fat and saturated fat were about 10 percent lower but the sodium much higher in the meatless burger. I compared a “sausage” patty made from wheat and soy protein with a sausage patty made from pork. The calories and the sodium were about the same, but the percentages of saturated fat and cholesterol in the meatless sausage were much lower than the real pork sausage. Some meat substitutes use healthy fats like canola and sunflower oil while others use coconut oil and cocoa butter

Meat is important in the American diet for many nutrients including B12, zinc, iron, magnesium and complete proteins. The alt-protein products might have these added as ingredients, but you need to look at the nutrition information. Otherwise, if you use these products routinely you will need another source of those important nutrients.

Keep in mind, there are lots of other ingredients added to the meat alternatives. For

example, food scientists can create heme in genetically-modified soybeans. They would do that to emulate the bloody umami of animal-derived beef. We have read that umami is Japanese for “essence of deliciousness.” Those who work in the flavor and taste industry describe it as the meaty, savory deliciousness that deepens flavor of the food it is added to. Monosodium glutamate or MSG is considered to be umami.

You, your doctor, and registered dietitian nutritionist can decide if you would get health benefits by eating more of these products and less meat. It's thought by many that producing these plant-based proteins releases less CO2 than raising livestock but not all agree.

Stay tuned as the experts try to figure out a sustainable diet for the world. The experts' definition for a sustainable diet is one that “is protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, economically fair and affordable, nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy while optimizing natural and human resources.” That's a very big challenge.

Professor emerita Kathy Kolasa, a registered dietitian nutritionist and Ph.D., is an affiliate professor in the Brody School of Medicine at ECU. Contact her at kolaska@ecu.edu.

Dog-walking injury could be knee hyperextension

Q I was walking our dog at night and didn't see a big hole. I stepped right into it, full force, and I think my knee actually bent backwards. I can walk OK, but now my knee hurts. Could I have damaged something? How do I know if I need to see my doctor?

A From your description, it sounds as though you hyperextended your knee. That means your knee joint was forced backward, just as you described, opposite of the direction in which it is designed to move. Depending on the force of the impact, and the degree to which the knee over-straightened, this can result in damage to the ligaments that stabilize the joint.

The knee is the largest joint in the body, and it is a remarkable feat of engineering that functions as a hinge. The knee joint links together the thigh bone, or femur, and the tibia, the larger bone in your shin. It also includes the kneecap, or patella. A series of internal and external ligaments weave their way through the joint capsule. They not only connect the three bones that make up the knee, but also keep the moving parts flexible and stable. The ligaments limit rotation and sideways motion that could cause injury to the knee, and yet allow the joint to flex and extend within a precisely calibrated range of motion.

It's when the knee joint is stressed beyond what the ligaments can bear that injuries occur. This can happen in a fall, during a jump, from a collision or in the unexpected shift of weight from when you stepped into that hole. In the case of hyperextension, the injury is typically to the anterior cruciate ligament, or ACL, and the posterior cruciate

ASK THE DOCTORS



EVE GLAZIER



ELIZABETH KO

ligament, or PCL, which run through the center of the knee.

When someone hyperextends their knee, they usually feel the joint move out of alignment, just as you did. It often results in localized pain that ranges from moderate to severe. You may see swelling or even visible bruising in the area. Straightening the joint may cause pain, and the knee may feel weak or unstable.

When someone experiences a loss of mobility in the knee following hyperextension, it can be a sign of damage to the ligaments, and perhaps to the surrounding tissue. Depending on how severe the injury is, treatment can range from rest, the use of a knee brace and over-the-counter meds for pain and inflammation, to surgical repair and physical therapy. In mild injuries, recovery time can take from two to four weeks. When surgery is required, full recovery can take up to six months or more.

Because the knee is such an important and complex joint, we think it's a good idea to have your injury assessed by your doctor.

Eve Glazier, M.D., MBA, and Elizabeth Ko, M.D., are internists and assistant professors of medicine at UCLA Health.

‘Magic mushrooms’ for therapy? Veterans help sway conservatives

Researchers are studying psilocybin, the psychedelic active ingredient in some mushrooms, to treat PTSD and other conditions.

BY LINDSAY WHITEHURST
The Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY — Matthew Butler spent 27 years in the Army, but it took a day in jail to convince him his post-traumatic stress disorder was out of control.

The recently retired Green Beret had already tried antidepressants, therapy and a support dog. But his arrest for punching a hole in his father's wall after his family tried to stage an intervention in Utah made it clear none of it was working.

“I had a nice house, I had a great job, whatever, but I was unable to sleep, had frequent nightmares, crippling anxiety, avoiding crowds,” he said. “My life was a wreck.”

He eventually found psychedelic drugs, and he says they changed his life. “I was able to finally step way back and go, ‘Oh, I see what's going on here. I get it now,’” said Butler, now 52. Today his run-ins with police have ended, he's happily married and reconciled with his parents.

Butler, who lives in the Salt Lake City suburbs, is among military veterans in several U.S. states helping to persuade lawmakers to study psychedelic mushrooms for therapeutic use.

Conservative Utah has become at least the fourth state over the last two years to approve studying the potential medical use of psychedelics, which are still federally illegal. A string of cities have also decriminalized so-called magic mush-



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Matthew Butler, who spent 27 years in the Army, shows a 2014 photo of himself during his last deployment in Kabul, Afghanistan, on March 30, in Sandy, Utah.

rooms and an explosion of investment money is flowing into the arena.

Experts say the research is promising for treating conditions ranging from PTSD to quitting smoking, but caution some serious risks remain, especially for those with certain mental health conditions.

Oregon is so far the only state to legalize the therapeutic use of psilocybin, the psychedelic active ingredient in certain mushrooms. But studying them for therapy has made inroads not only in blue states like Hawaii, Connecticut and Maryland, but also GOP-led Texas, Utah and Oklahoma, which passed a study bill through the state House this year.

The progress stands in contrast to medical marijuana, which Utah lawmakers refused to allow until a ballot measure helped push it through. However, the proposal to study a broad range of psychedelic drugs passed easily this year.

Texas has yet to legalize medical marijuana, but former Republican Gov. Rick Perry helped shepherd through a bill last year to use \$1.4 million to fund a study of psilocybin for treating PTSD.

“The stigma attached to

psilocybin and most psychedelics dates back to the '60s and '70s. It's been very hard for them to overcome,” said Democratic Rep. Alex Dominguez, who sponsored the bill. “My approach was, ‘Let's find the group that all sides claim that they are supportive of.’ And that would be veterans.”

He also heard from conservatives like Perry who support the use of psilocybin to treat PTSD — and let advocates from that end of the political spectrum take the lead publicly.

Maryland also gave bipartisan approval to spending \$1 million this year to fund alternative therapies for veterans, including psychedelics. Democratic sponsor Sen. Sarah Elfreth, whose district includes the U.S. Naval Academy, noted the spike in suicides among veterans.

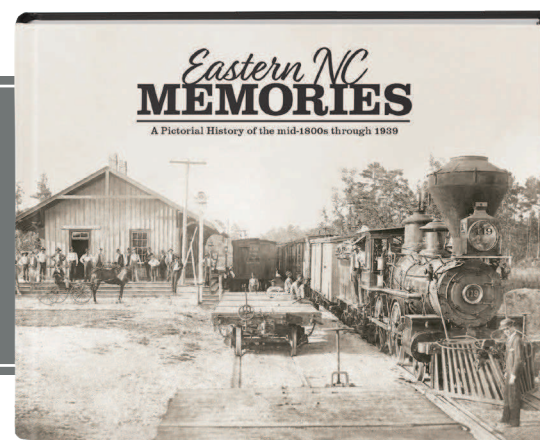
“I don't envision the VA acting anytime soon,” she said. “We're at a true crisis level and it's time for the states to step up.”

Psilocybin has been decriminalized in nearby Washington, D.C., as well as Denver, which decriminalized it in 2019, followed by Oakland and Santa Cruz in California, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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