

# More Plants, Less Meat

If you are a regular reader of this space, you know that in each issue of *Naples Health*, we outline one of the “Power 9” of the Blue Zones—that is, the nine behaviors that people who live the longest, healthiest lives tend to demonstrate. This time, we’re discussing the “plant slant,” or eating more plant-based food and less meat.

“Research tells us that people who live longer and healthier tend to eat a diet rich in vegetables, fruit, legumes and whole grains,” says Deb Logan, Blue Zones Project executive director. “If they do eat meat, they tend to eat a small amount—maybe the size of the palm of their hand. And they would have that a couple times a month, maybe to celebrate an occasion, as opposed to an everyday staple.”

Logan goes on to say, “Most Americans, by contrast, celebrate too often—sometimes eating meat two or even three times a day.”

Experts note that people who eat a plant-based diet tend to have lower risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and some cancers. The diet gives you more fiber, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants and usually less fat. People who eat a plant-based diet also tend to weigh less.



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“You don’t have to become vegetarian or vegan,” Logan goes on to say. “Start by just looking at your plate and asking whether you could have more fruits and vegetables, beans or whole grains. Next step, maybe consider skipping meat at one of the meals. Make it a gradual transition so it is a more palatable lifestyle change. Just

try to do a little better—lean more toward plants and less toward meat. That will help lower your risk of chronic disease, slowly but surely—one bite at a time.”

If you don’t know where to start, check out your local farmers markets. The produce is usually fresh and locally grown. Vendors often let you sample things, so try something you’ve never had before. Farmers markets are also social, which fulfills another of the “Power 9” principles.

If you don’t like to cook, there are many Blue Zones-

approved restaurants in the area. Check the menu for “plant slant” choices. Here are some local favorites to choose from:

- **The Dock at Crayton Cove**, 845 12th Ave S.
- **The Greek Gourmet**, 2196 Airport-Pulling Road
- **Sakura Hawaiian Grill**, 3375 Pine Ridge Road
- **Cosmos Ristorante and Pizzeria**, 536 Tamiami Trail N. (The owner is from Sardinia, which is one of the original Blue Zones sites whose citizens live longer and healthier lives.)

For other choices, go to [www.bluezonesproject.com](http://www.bluezonesproject.com) and look under the “organizations” tab. **NH**