

Research report

Vegan lifestyle behaviors. An exploration of congruence with health-related beliefs and assessed health indices [☆]

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Highlights

- We compared health-related behaviors and outcome among differently motivated vegans.
- 81% vegans reported no chronic disease diagnoses; 19% reported 6 disease conditions.
- There were no statistical differences in health indices among vegan categories.
- Normal BMI, and healthy food and lifestyle practices were common among most vegans.
- Intakes of vitamin D and sodium were incongruent with recommended values.

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate health belief as a major motive for diet and lifestyle behaviors of 100 vegans in the United States; and to determine congruence with selected health and nutrition outcomes. Response data from an administered questionnaire was analyzed. Statistical analyses determined the most common factors influencing diet choice; the number of vegans practicing particular lifestyle behaviors; body mass index; and prevalence of self-reported chronic disease diagnoses. Nutrient intakes were analyzed and assessed against Dietary Reference Intakes. Health was the most reported reason for diet choice (47%). In the health belief, animal welfare, and religious/other motive categories, low percentages of chronic disease diagnoses were reported: 27%, 11%, and 15%, respectively. There were no significant differences in health behaviors and indices among vegan motive categories, except for product fat content choices. Within the entire study population, health-related vegan motive coincided with regular exercise; 71% normal BMI (mean = 22.6); minimal alcohol and smoking practices; frequently consumed vegetables, nuts, and grains; healthy choices in meal types, cooking methods, and low-fat product consumption; and adequate intakes for most protective nutrients when compared to reference values. But incongruence was found with 0% intake adequacy for vitamin D; and observation of excessive sodium use.

Keywords

Health beliefs; Vegetarian; Vegans; Lifestyle behaviors; Food practices; Nutrient intake