


Bill Clinton goes vegan, but it's not going to be easy

Failed vegan warns of creamy pitfall: No cheese!

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In an almost hell-has-frozen-over moment, former president Bill Clinton — legendary for his love of hamburgers and fries — has become a vegan.

Hamburgers — and all meat — are out (along with dairy, eggs, and nearly all oil). Fruits, beans, and vegetables are in.

Clinton, who recently turned 65 and is slimmer than he's been in decades, told [CNN's Dr. Sanjay Gupta](#) that he has more energy thanks to the diet — which was prompted by his struggles with heart disease.

But nutritionists — and failed vegans — warn that the vegan diet is no cinch to maintain.

"Our food environment is difficult to navigate if you're trying to eat healthfully," says Andrea Giancoli, a Los Angeles registered dietitian. In other words, Bill is going to be bombarded with ads for quadruple bacon cheeseburgers.

Giancoli, a spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association, says it's especially tough for brand-new vegans, especially if they're not already eating a veggie-rich diet.

"For most people making this change, it's difficult," she says. "Especially if you start from



Mario Tama / AFP/Getty Images

Back in 2000, Bill Clinton ordered a cheeseburger "with the works" at a diner in Queens. Now a vegan convert, he's more likely to go for a bowl of legumes.

eating burgers and fries every day. Sometimes when we go full-blown with things and don't know how to do it, we fail. If you're already eating a lot of fruits and vegetables, it'll be less of a transition. It really all depends on your starting place and your motivation."

Amanda Castleman, a 36-year-old new media instructor from Seattle, says she went vegan for a short period of time, but had to go back to a vegetarian diet thanks to one deliciously creamy obstacle: cheese.




"Cheese is my weakness, so that was a very much a problem with the vegan diet," she says. "I had a great vegan cookbook which got me over the hurdle of things tasting bad, but there really was no replacement for cheese. I couldn't go all the way there permanently."

Giancoli — who was a vegan until she began eating fish for the omega3 fatty acids — says that applying a few vegan principles to any diet, even one that includes the occasional steak and slab of white cheddar, can still have benefits.

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"Anytime you're moving away from an animal food diet to a plant-based diet, you're benefiting your health," she says. "People on plant-based diets have less heart disease, less obesity, less hypertension, less type 2 diabetes. It's a much more healthful way to go, it's just not what everyone is accustomed to."

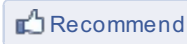
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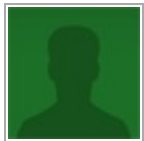
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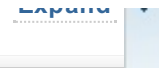
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