

## Grass-fed Beef

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### GO GRASS

*The key to healthy red meat.*

For the general population, red meat doesn't typically conjure the image of "health food," but rather weight gain, high cholesterol and heart disease. Unfortunately, this bad boy reputation has shifted a significant source of protein out of many households. True, certain beef options are unhealthy due to feedlot conditions which generally require cows to be fed poor diets and treated to prevent diseases from overcrowding. But all beef isn't bad. In fact, smart choices can improve their (and your) overall health.

Many consumers have yet to be introduced to grass-fed beef. This label is used to describe cattle that eat grass throughout their lifetime. Most cows are given some type of grain, such as corn, especially before they are taken to market. Corn helps fatten up the cattle, is a very cheap food source, and provides extra fat to give the meat a marbled appearance on store shelves. Unfortunately, the cow's digestive tract is made to handle grasses exclusively. After a time of being fed grains, the health of the cow can drop considerably. Consumers, in turn, eat meat from these affected animals. This meat is coming from a cow that may not have reached its nutritional potential because it was not eating the diet that nature intended.

These animals are often administered growth hormones and antibiotics as well. Many consumers are growing concerned over the potential interaction of growth hormones and the human body. If the cow's health declines due to poor diet or stress from being in a confined area, it may frequently succumb to sickness. A sick cow may infect other cows who suffer the same circumstances. To combat this, farmers often include antibiotics in the feed to prevent infection. These antibiotics may find their way into the meat and onto your Monday night entree. This can add to antibiotic resistance, the creation of superbugs resistant to regular antibiotic drugs, in humans.

Alternatively, grass-fed cattle receive the food their bodies know how to digest. By eating healthier food, the cattle produce a much healthier fat ratio. Grass-fed cows also have higher rates of omega-3 fatty acids, typically found in fish like salmon. They are higher in a fatty acid called conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), which science supports as having protection against various types of cancer [1, 2]. In animal studies, CLA is also linked with loss of fat [3, 4]. In addition, beef is a good source of iron and B vitamins.

Though many people do well and feel better on a primarily vegetarian diet, others do not. Vegetarianism can lead to symptoms of fatigue, worsening allergies and skin rashes. Much of this problem originates from the lack of protein and increase in carbohydrates. All of us need some form of carbohydrate, which is a fancy word for sugar, but it has to be in balance with our body's protein needs. Those who lack adequate protein often have a hard time losing weight or problems with sugar cravings. Sometimes just supplementing a little more protein in the diet will

improve stamina significantly.

Note that grass-fed and organic are not the same in terms of beef or other meats. Organic typically means that the food the animals ate was not treated with chemicals, but that doesn't state if the food was corn, grass or something else. Organic may or may not indicate whether the cattle received growth hormones or antibiotics. Look for meat advertised as grass-fed. If possible, confirm that the animal was not given antibiotics or growth hormone. Grass-fed is the most important title, as it would be rare for a farmer to go through the efforts of grass-feeding only to treat them with hormones or antibiotics. Do you and your family a favor, and move onto greener pastures.

References:

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