

–an **EVEN** exclusive interview –

with



Dr. Neal Barnard

**President - Physicians
Committee for
Responsible Medicine
(PCRM)**

Neal Barnard, MD, FACC, is an Adjunct Associate Professor of Medicine at the George Washington University School of Medicine in Washington, DC, and President of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine.

Dr. Barnard has led numerous research studies investigating the effects of diet on diabetes, body weight, and chronic pain, including a groundbreaking study of dietary interventions in type 2 diabetes, funded by the National Institutes of Health. Dr. Barnard has authored more than 80 scientific publications and 20 books for medical and lay readers.

As president of the Physicians Committee, Dr. Barnard leads programs advocating for preventive medicine, good nutrition, and higher ethical standards in research. He has hosted four PBS television programs on nutrition and health, and is the editor in chief of the Nutrition Guide for Clinicians, a textbook made available to all U.S. medical students. His research contributed to the acceptance of plant-based diets in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. In 2015, he was named a Fellow of the American College of Cardiology.



Barnard Medical Center - 2016
A New Model for Medical Care

In 2016, he founded the Barnard Medical Center in Washington, DC, as a model for making nutrition a routine part of all medical care.

Originally from Fargo, North Dakota, Dr. Barnard received his M.D. degree at the George Washington University School of Medicine and completed his residency at the same institution. He practiced at St. Vincent's Hospital in New York before returning to Washington to found the Physicians Committee in 1985.



EVEN: How did veganism become part of your life?

NB: The year before I went to medical school, I worked as an autopsy assistant in a Minneapolis hospital. One day, a man died of a massive

heart attack in the hospital, and we had to examine the body. The pathologist removed a section of ribs and then showed me the narrowed coronary arteries, and also showed me how the same process had begun in the arteries to the brain, the kidneys, and the legs. And he explained how this artery damage came from the meaty American diet I had grown up on.

When he was finished, he left the room, and I put the ribs back into the chest and cleaned up. When I was done, I went up to the cafeteria, where it turned out *they were serving ribs for lunch*. The ribs looked like a dead body and smelled like one, too. And of course, they *are* the remains of a body. I didn't become a vegetarian right away, but I couldn't eat them, and that experience worked on me for quite a while.

Soon after that, I became more aware of the health risks of meat and about the animal abuse that is intrinsic to the meat industry, and I stopped eating meat. And eventually, I realized that the dairy and egg industries are just as bad, and I stopped eating animal products altogether. And I never looked back.

EVEN: What advice would you give to a vegan advocate wanting to become more of an activist?

NB: If you have a particular skill—law, media, etc.—use that. But if not, there is still so much you can do. Social media allows us all to reach thousands of people quickly. If you can reach out to your network in a positive way, you'll inspire many people. Share books and films with friends and family.



Photo Credit: Steve Shapiro

EVEN: What do you think makes veganism hard for people?

NB: It's so much easier than they imagine. It's a bit like going to the swimming pool in the summertime. You'd love to jump in, but you're worried that the water will be cold. Sooner or later, you do jump in, and you are glad you did. It's not hard at all. Instead of spaghetti with meat sauce, have the spicy tomato sauce. Instead of meat chili, have the bean chili. It's easy.

EVEN: What, in your opinion, is the most misunderstood idea about veganism?

NB: For some reason, meat-eaters are obsessed with the fear of “not getting enough protein.” Despite the fact that there is abundant protein in a plant-based diet and that the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics has been very clear on this for many years, this mythology persists. There are some legitimate nutritional issues, but they are easy to solve. For calcium, have plenty of green leafy vegetables. And be sure to have a reliable source of vitamin B12—either fortified foods or a supplement. Overall, a vegan diet gives you much better nutrition, compared with a meaty diet.

It is time for doctors and hospitals to make the transition from being bystanders in food-related illnesses to becoming role models and leaders in the fight for health. – Neal Barnard, MD

EVEN: What one thing from your thinking in childhood do you wish you could change?

NB: My childhood included the same lack of awareness of animals' interests that most children have. So, I hunted with my father and did all manner of things to animals that were culturally normal but were patently cruel. I would like to see compassion and kindness instilled in children early on. If we could do that, it would be a different world.



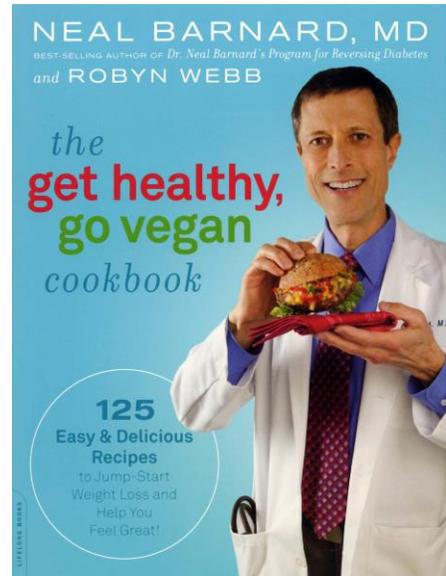
EVEN: If you were to mentor a younger person today, what guidance might you offer? What encouraging words might you share with a newbie?

NB: It's good to learn as much as you can—read my books, and others, too. Learn to communicate clearly and concisely, and work fast. Don't worry about money. Life is short; focus on what counts.

The beef industry has contributed to more American deaths than all the wars of this century, all natural disasters, and all automobile accidents combined. – Neal Barnard, MD

EVEN: Do you have a favorite vegan meal or food you can tell us about that really makes veganism work for you?

NB: In Fargo, ND, where I grew up, the Mexican Village restaurant offered a burrito, stuffed with refried beans and enough jalapenos to be not quite life-threatening. And if you left off the cheese, it was vegan. It's still there today.



EVEN: What one thing makes veganism worthwhile for you?

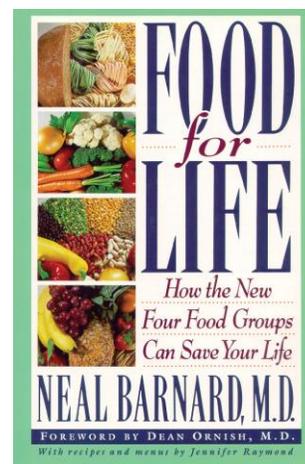
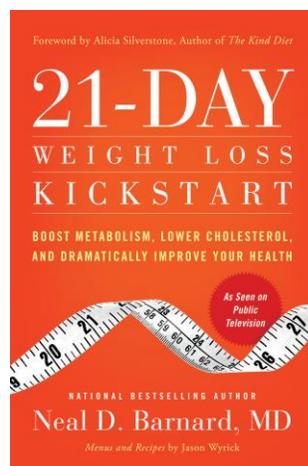
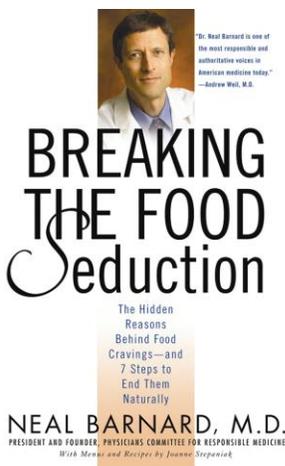
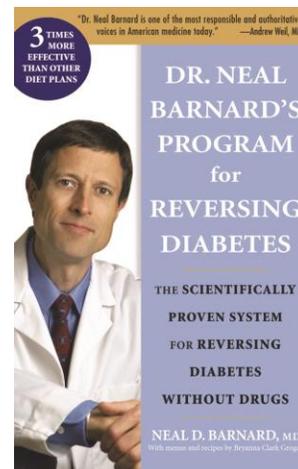
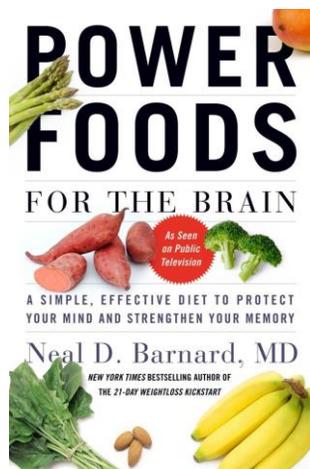
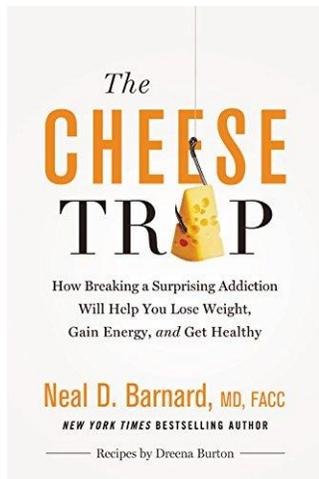
NB: What choice do we have? If you don't follow a vegan diet, you are fostering grotesque cruelty, you're damaging the planet, and you are a bad example for those around you, leading them into food habits that will harm their health. Following a vegan lifestyle is easy, and it's the only way to go.

EVEN: Any opinion or insight on the future of veganism in today's world?

NB: The food industry continues to work against us, as does the power of addiction to not-so-healthy foods. But just as we won the battle against cigarettes, we'll win this one, too.



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Getting Healthy and Staying that Way

If you have been gaining weight, needing more and more medications, or developing one or many complications, my goal is to help you change course. We now know that it is possible to lose weight effectively and permanently, reduce or eliminate medications, reverse heart disease, and even improve the symptoms of neuropathy [with a whole-food, plant-based diet]. If you thought you had to surrender to advancing symptoms, think again. You are now in the driver's seat. - Neal D. Barnard, MD

Source: Dr. Neal Barnard's Program for Reversing Diabetes

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