



# PLANTPURE COMMUNITIES

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## INFO SHEET: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR PROTEIN?

Transitioning to WFPB

The first question people ask when they hear you are going plant-based or vegan is often, “Where do you get your Protein?” Due to highly successful marketing of the meat industry, protein has become synonymous with meat and animal products, leading many people to believe meat is the only source of protein. This Info Sheet was crafted to help people who are transitioning to a plant-based diet answer this question: ‘where do you get your protein?’ - which has been posed to everyone who has ever made the transition! This Sheet also includes a list of links to nutrition information and responses from the experts to help debunk the ‘protein myth.’

According to Dr. Alan Goldhamer, D.C., “If a varied diet sufficient in calories is consumed, it is virtually impossible to get an inadequate protein intake. Even a diet devoid of concentrated sources of protein such as animal products, nuts and legumes will meet optimum protein needs.”<sup>1</sup>

According to Dr. Michael Greger, M.D., “those eating plant based diets average about twice the requirement for protein. People are more likely to suffer from protein excess than protein deficiency.”<sup>2</sup>

### First - A few key factual statements:

- Protein is an important nutrient required for the building, maintenance, and repair of the body’s tissues. Amino acids, the building blocks of protein, can be synthesized by the body or ingested from food. There are 20 different amino acids in the food we eat, but our body can only make 11 of them. The nine essential amino acids, which cannot be produced by the body, must be obtained from food.<sup>3</sup>
- There is more protein per calorie in black beans<sup>4</sup> than there is in chicken breast.<sup>5</sup>
- Most Americans eat way too much protein, and rather than a protein deficiency, we suffer from a fiber deficiency. According to a 2008 systematic review<sup>6</sup> by The Cleveland Clinic Journal of Medicine, 63 million Americans are hospitalized for constipation each year. These hospitalizations

1 <https://nutritionstudies.org/get-protein-where/>

2 <https://nutritionfacts.org/video/the-great-protein-fiasco/>

3 <http://www.pcrm.org/health/diets/vegdiets/how-can-i-get-enough-protein-the-protein-myth>

4 <https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/search/list>

5 <https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/search/list>

6 <http://www.mdedge.com/ccjm/article/94849/gastroenterology/update-constipation-one-treatment-does-not-fit-all>



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are largely due to fiber deficiency, whereas a diagnosis of protein deficiency is almost unheard of in America.

- Protein content in human breast milk is sometimes described as “extremely low” but it is not low at all, it is right where it needs to be - it is the natural level for humans. There is no reasonable scientific consensus to recommend protein consumption over the Recommended Dietary Allowance (see below).<sup>7</sup>

- All natural foods - from lettuce to nuts - contain varying amounts of protein.<sup>8</sup>

- Protein combining is not necessary - There’s no need to plan meals around complementary proteins (that is an old myth based the idea that some plant foods are missing certain amino acids rendering them as ‘incomplete’ proteins). In 2009, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND) released a paper<sup>9</sup> stating that eating a variety of plant foods over the course of the day provides all the required amino acids.<sup>10</sup>



- High-protein diets will not help you lose weight. Calories are calories, whether they’re from carbs or protein. Excess protein calories will not magically turn into muscle or burn fat.<sup>11</sup>
- A 2016 study revealed that those that consumed the most animal protein compared to plant protein had a higher risk of death, particularly cardiovascular disease.<sup>12</sup>

## How Much Protein Do We Need?

- The USDA Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for protein suggests getting 0.80 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight<sup>13</sup>, which equates to about 8-10% of total calories from protein.
- A whole food plant-based diet of vegetables, fruits, legumes, grains and tubers can easily provide the RDA of about 8-10% dietary protein.

7 <https://nutritionfacts.org/video/the-great-protein-fiasco/>

8 <http://nutritionstudies.org/get-protein-where/>

9 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19562864>

10 <https://www.pcrm.org/health/diets/vegdiets/how-can-i-get-enough-protein-the-protein-myth>

11 <https://www.pcrm.org/health/diets/vegdiets/how-can-i-get-enough-protein-the-protein-myth>

12 <http://nutritionstudies.org/animal-protein-linked-to-death/>

13 <http://healthyeating.sfgate.com/usda-protein-requirements-grams-8619.html>



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- Most Americans consume significantly more protein than the RDA, getting 12-20% of their calories from protein. This is largely due to overconsumption of animal-based foods, and this high protein intake increases the risk for our most troublesome chronic diseases.<sup>1</sup>

## Resources:

- The Great Protein Fiasco (5:35 min) - In this video Dr. Greger, MD, explains how the field of nutrition got human protein requirements spectacularly wrong, leading to a massive recalculation. <https://nutritionfacts.org/video/the-great-protein-fiasco/>
- Where Do You Get Your Protein? - This article lays out everything you need to know about this commonly asked question. <https://nutritionstudies.org/get-protein-where/>
- The Mystique of Protein and Its Implications - This article by Dr. T. Colin Campbell, PhD., explains how much protein we should be consuming and covers the negative health effects of consuming too much protein from animal based sources. <https://nutritionstudies.org/mystique-of-protein-implications/>
- The Protein Juggernaut Has Deep Roots - In this article, Dr. T. Colin Campbell, PhD, explains the history behind protein and how society's concentration on this one particular nutrient has clouded public perception of what nutrition means. <https://nutritionstudies.org/protein-juggernaut-deep-roots/>
- How Much Protein We Actually Need? RDA vs. Dietary Guidelines - In this article, Micaela Karlsen, MSPH, explains that Americans are consuming protein in amounts exceeding the recommended amount, and that protein needs can be met on a whole food, plant-based diet. <https://nutritionstudies.org/how-much-protein-do-we-need-rda-vs-dietary-guidelines/>
- Protein & Disease, Dairy vs Soy and Nutritional Myths and More - A 40 minute interview with Dr. T. Colin Campbell, PhD, on protein & disease, dairy vs. soy, nutritional myths and more. <https://nutritionstudies.org/protein-disease-dairy-vs-soy-and-nutritional-myths-and-more-guilt-free-tv/>
- The Protein Myth (PCRM) - This webpage provides general information on protein and the negative health consequences of consuming animal based protein. It also includes a plant-based protein checklist and sample recipes. <http://www.pcrm.org/health/diets/vegdiets/how-can-i-get-enough-protein-the-protein-myth>

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1 <https://nutritionstudies.org/mystique-of-protein-implications/>



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- The Protein Combining Myth (4:19 min) - In this video, Dr. Greger, MD, debunks how the myth that plant proteins are incomplete, necessitating protein combining, which was debunked by the scientific nutrition community decades ago. <https://nutritionfacts.org/video/the-protein-combining-myth/>
- Animal Protein Linked to Death - This article explains the findings from a 2016 study which found that those who consumed higher animal protein had an increased risk of death, specifically from cardiovascular disease. <https://nutritionstudies.org/animal-protein-linked-to-death/>
- Animal vs. Plant Protein - In this article Dr. T. Colin Campbell explains the differences between protein from animals, and protein from plants, and how they react differently within the human body. <https://nutritionstudies.org/animal-vs-plant-protein/>

*Disclaimer: The information shared by PlantPure Communities (PPC) is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. If you are on medication and are changing to a whole food, plant-based diet, you should discuss with your healthcare provider the changes that you are making in your diet and how these changes may require an adjustment in medication dosage. It is important that you work with your doctor to monitor your condition and medication dosage during your change of dietary practices.*

*We welcome your suggestions and ideas! Please send them to [info@plantpurecommunities.org](mailto:info@plantpurecommunities.org). This material may not be used out of context. Please refer to PPC's terms and conditions for more information. Updated November 2017.*