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## WHAT ABOUT PROTEIN?

By J. Morris Hicks

If you're like most people, you may have been wondering about that question since you started reading this book. And, if you decide to adopt the 4Leaf lifestyle, this is the question you will likely hear every single day for the rest of your life:

“Where do you get your protein?”

You will hear this question from family, friends, co-workers, doctors and occasionally from complete strangers. Please don't answer flippantly, as many who ask you the question will actually have genuine concerns about your health if you don't get enough protein. So you want to give them a serious response.

**Suggested responses to that very common question:**

“From the same place that some of the strongest animals in the world (elephants, giraffes, horses, hippos, etc.) get theirs. From whole plants.”

“Actually, plants have a lot more protein than most people think. Did you know that broccoli is 40% protein and that calorie for calorie, spinach has more protein than sirloin?”

“Like the gorilla, our closest relative in the wild, I get my protein from whole plants.”

“Even vegetables containing the least protein have more than enough for humans. It’s virtually impossible not to get enough protein as long as you are eating sufficient calories.”

“Many cultures throughout the world live their entire lives eating little, if any, animal products—they are not only strong, their incidence of chronic illnesses like cancer and heart disease is near zero.”

To summarize, we have many things to worry about in life, but getting enough protein in our diet is not one of them.

**So why is everyone so worried about getting enough protein?** Because of the long history of advertising by the meat, dairy, egg and fish industries. All of their products contain only two macronutrients (fat and protein) and it surely wouldn’t be good marketing to promote the first one.

**What is the optimal amount of protein in our diets?** The Recommended Daily Allowance, RDA (note this is *recommended* amount and not a *minimum* amount) is 0.8 mg protein/kilogram, which translates to about 8-10% of our calories. This RDA was based on data showing that virtually every individual functions well on 8-10% dietary protein and that protein intake over 10% is associated with increased incidence of many chronic diseases.

**So protein consumption over 10% is actually *bad* for me?** Yes. It is associated with significant increased risk of

cancer, heart disease, kidney disease and autoimmune disorders. I should clarify that it is virtually impossible to get too much protein if you're getting it ONLY from plant-based sources. And even if you do, it doesn't cause the problems that are associated with too much animal protein.

**But won't eating more protein make me stronger and faster?** No. Numerous studies have shown that athletes actually do better when they switch from a high protein diet to a plant-based one that is 10% protein. Many pro athletes have taken these studies to heart and are now cleaning up the court, so to speak. Just ask Serena Williams.

If you need more reassurance that a plant-based diet won't make you weak and puny, check out Mac Danzig, Brendan Brazier, Patrik Bobaumann, Scott Jurek and Rich Roll.

**Can't I get my 10% protein from animal sources?** No. Animal-based foods are all much higher in protein than 10%. There is no way to eat animal foods without getting a higher than recommended amount of protein in your diet.

For more "protein" information, see Chapter 29.