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## IT'S TIME TO TALK WITH YOUR DOCTOR

By J. Morris Hicks

Before you begin to make big changes in the way you are eating, there is one more topic that we need to cover--talking with your medical doctor. Perhaps you've already seen this message on the copyright page:

**CAUTION.** Eating the 4Leaf way (described throughout this book) may quickly decrease your need for medications. You should tell your physician what you're doing. If he/she is not familiar with, or skeptical of, this eating style, please direct him or her to [plantician.org](http://plantician.org) or [nutritionstudies.org](http://nutritionstudies.org).

Why is it so important to involve your physician? Because it is imperative that appropriate adjustments are made to any medications that you might be taking, because you are likely to need far less of them rather quickly. This is particularly true for diabetes and high blood pressure medications. You will see an example of this in the next chapter.

When you first mention to your physician that you are in

the process of adopting a whole food, plant-based diet, you are far more likely to hear words of caution than encouragement. There are two primary reasons behind that likely response:

**1. It's not how most doctors eat.** In all likelihood, your doctor and his/her family eat some combination of meat, dairy, eggs and fish on a routine basis and, like almost everyone else, they truly believe that they need to eat some animal protein to be healthy. That's because of the “protein myth” that we cover in Chapter 29.

**2. It's not what they're taught.** Despite a mountain of scientific and clinical evidence that a whole food, plant-based diet supports optimal health, it is not yet part of the curriculum in our schools of medicine. But that hasn't prevented a host of pioneering doctors from guiding their patients through the process of taking charge of their own health--just by changing what they eat. You can take charge of your own health too.

If your physician is discouraging you from adopting a whole food, plant-based diet, ask him or her if he/she is familiar with the works of Caldwell Esselstyn, MD (Cleveland Clinic), Dean Ornish, MD (UCSF) and T. Colin Campbell, PhD (Cornell). They are the three experts (medical and scientific) who influenced President Clinton to adopt a similar diet, saying he did so “to reverse his heart disease” in 2010.

If your doctor is knowledgeable about this way of eating and can give you a valid reason why you should not adopt this diet (such as you have diverticulitis) please listen and heed. If not, please don't let your doctor deter you from adopting the diet eaten by the healthiest people on Earth.

If your doctor is not familiar with the health benefits of a whole food, plant-based diet, please encourage him/her to check out the work of the doctors listed above and perhaps watch *Forks Over Knives*. For more information, he/she can review the information at [plantpricician.org](http://plantpricician.org) and [nutritionstudies.org](http://nutritionstudies.org).

**In their defense.** Doctors make up one of the most highly respected groups of professionals in the world. Most of them enter the medical field to help people, and they spend many years and lots of money educating themselves for a career in their chosen field. Later, they find themselves trapped in a system that promotes profits over health and confusion over clarity.

In reality, the United States currently has a “Disease Care System” rather than a “Health Care System.” This system trains and pays physicians to do tests, conduct procedures and prescribe drugs once disease has struck and it provides little training in, or reimbursement for, keeping people healthy in the first place. Philosopher Wendell Berry describes how our medical system treats the topic of food:

*People are fed by the food industry, which pays no attention to health--and are treated by the health industry, which pays no attention to food.*

In the future, physicians’ incomes will be tied directly to the health of their patients and then they WILL be “paying attention to food.” But why wait when you have the opportunity to change your health for the better today?

You might want to mention to your doctor that it would be great to have a physician who understands the role of nutrition in health and is helping patients take steps to prevent or reverse up to 80% of the chronic diseases they might encounter in their lifetime.

On your next visit, ask your doctor if he or she has taken the time to read any of the works of Esselstyn, Ornish or Campbell or to watch *Forks Over Knives*. You might also want to leave him/her a copy of Dr. Graff's letter to all of her fellow medical providers in Chapter 37.

Finally, are you thinking about getting a new doctor who truly “gets it” about food? For a registry of medical practitioners who are dedicated to integrating plant-based nutrition into their practices, visit [plantbaseddocs.com](http://plantbaseddocs.com) for a searchable directory.