

“The nutrient quality of whole plant foods”

By Alexa Lane

A diet of whole plant foods consists of vegetables, fruits, legumes, beans, whole grains, nuts and seeds. A common question that comes up when adopting a plant based diet is: “where do I get my protein?” In reality, a varied whole food plant based diet provides all the protein and essential amino acids the body needs and meets the 8-10% RDA requirement for protein. Plant based proteins are health promoting, while the protein in animal foods is linked to disease. Dr. T. Colin Campbell conducted multiple studies on both human and laboratory animals which provide strong evidence that diets high in animal based protein contribute to diseases including obesity, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, osteoporosis, kidney stones, and Alzheimer’s. Specifically, diets higher than 10% animal based protein can put one at risk for cancer. Plant based diets have been shown in Dr. Campbell’s work to reverse promotion of cancer. Additionally, animal protein is high in cholesterol which we do not need to consume, higher in saturated fat, and does not provide any fiber. High fat and high cholesterol are linked to obesity, heart disease and cancer as previously mentioned. Plant based foods are high in fiber, do not contain cholesterol and not only are they lower in fat, but the fat is more healthful. A whole food plant based diet contains about 10-12% fat, while the standard American diet is somewhere between 30-50% fat.

In regards to vitamins and minerals, the vitamins C, E, folate, and calcium are much higher in plant based foods and beta carotene is only made by plants. Taking supplements of vitamins A, C, E or folic acid has not been shown to have a long term effect on preventing disease.

Additionally, studies have shown calcium supplements or calcium from dairy products do not strengthen bones.

I truly believe nutrition represents all nutrients acting together to create a wholistic effect on the body. When one makes the shift to whole food plant based nutrition it will increase your physical capacity because you will lose weight naturally and your body will be well nourished from the nutrient density of the food. Your psychological well-being will be enhanced because you will have more energy and will no longer be addicted to certain foods that are unhealthy and create imbalance in the body.

Lastly, whole food plant based nutrition helps end unnecessary cruelty and the environmental damage that occurs due to the farming of animals. My hope is that it will lead not only to overall good health, but to more compassionate interactions with all.

Click here to read the study on calcium: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/9224182>