



Beans, Greens, and Protein Needs: Going Plant-based with Rhyan Geiger, RDN (ep – 67)

[00:00:00] **Rhyan Geiger** So protein can be for muscle building, but it has a lot of other important features in our bodies. So it talks to enzymes, it helps with like cellular level reactions, which can be very vital to our everyday life. So it's not just about huge gains and getting huge muscles, but also just like your overall health and how you're feeling every day.

[00:00:23] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** For anyone choosing a vegan, vegetarian, or simply more plant-based lifestyle, one of the first questions that comes up is protein. How do you get enough to stay strong, healthy, and energized? How do you balance beans, seeds, nuts, tofu, and other plant-based sources to fuel your day? These questions often lead to a deeper exploration of plant-based proteins. What are they? How do they work? And how do they compare to their animal-based counterparts? That's exactly what we're unpacking today with vegan dietitian, nutrition writer, and two-time author, Rhyan Geiger. Rhyan founded her company Phoenix Vegan Dietitian in 2018 after being inspired to adopt a more plant-based lifestyle, and she's made it her mission to help others thrive on a plant-based diet. In this episode, we're getting into how to make plant-based eating work. Whether you're curious, committed, or just looking to add more plants to your plate, this conversation is for you. All right, it's time for some nutrition news. Plant-based proteins have been getting attention, not just for sustainability, but also for their potential impact on chronic illnesses like heart disease. A recent article from Medical News Today highlighted a study from Harvard School of Public Health, which looked at the long-term effects of plant versus animal protein on heart health over a 30-year period. While researchers didn't pinpoint a perfect plant-to-animal protein ratio, they discovered that people who ate the most plant protein had nearly 30 percent lower risk of coronary heart disease. Heart disease continues to be one of the leading causes of death in the U.S. so if you've been considering adding more plant-based protein to your diet, this could be a great reason to give it a try. Welcome to the podcast, Rhyan. I'd love to start by having you introduce yourself.

[00:02:11] **Rhyan Geiger** I'm a plant-based registered dietitian, and my background is largely in community nutrition.



[00:02:17] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** I understand that maybe part of your inspiration to becoming vegan was watching a documentary.

[00:02:23] **Rhyan Geiger** It is. I was just randomly on Netflix and I found this documentary and it had a cow on it. So I watched it. The next day I was like, okay, I'm not going to eat animal products. But that's kind of what made me want to start the Instagram account that I have start the website because, and there are so many foods that fall into vegan eating. And I just was uneducated and had no idea what I was doing.

[00:02:46] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** From a dietitian perspective, how do you describe the benefits to people?

[00:02:51] **Rhyan Geiger** The most studied benefits with vegan is specifically with heart health, mostly because plant-based foods are going to be lower in saturated fat. Generally, they're also lower in sodium. They're also really high in fiber, which has a great benefit to heart health too. There are some other benefits that can be pulled out from research to like better blood sugar levels, a reduction on risk of certain cancers like colon cancer, especially because of the high fiber to kind of keep the GI moving. And that kind of goes with improved digestive health.

[00:03:21] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** Love to hear a little bit more about the protein content and how that works with plant-based food.

[00:03:27] **Rhyan Geiger** There are a lot of plant-based sources of protein, and I essentially just break it down into categories. So you've got your soy products, tofu, tempeh, edamame. You can also utilize legumes like beans, lentils, peas, things of that nature. And then you have other ingredients or foods too, like nuts, seeds, nut butters, and then protein boosters like spirulina, nutritional yeast. Those are all sources of plant-based protein.

[00:03:56] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** How do you counsel folks on like getting enough protein?

[00:03:59] **Rhyan Geiger** I'm like a huge tofu lover. I love tofu. I love tempeh, so that's usually where I lean. But then also, yeah, the beans and lentils, kind of



putting them all together to add that huge variety of plant-based proteins. And also fun because not only can there just be like a block of tofu or just like a bean, you can do so many things with it. There's some recipes that are even, well, you can make tortillas out of red lentils or like a higher protein, higher iron type of tortilla, which is so incredible.

[00:04:28] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** How else do you talk about protein for folks?

[00:04:31] **Rhyan Geiger** So protein can be for muscle building, but it has a lot of other important features in our body. So it talks to enzymes that helps with like cellular level reactions, which can be very vital to our everyday lives. So it's not just about the huge gains and getting huge muscles, but also just like your overall health and how you're feeling every day. You're not going to feel great without having protein.

[00:04:57] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** Can you touch real quickly on complete proteins versus incomplete proteins?

[00:05:02] **Rhyan Geiger** Yes. So for complete proteins, that is just all having all essential amino acids, which there's nine of them. Complete proteins, you don't have to have them in every single meal. A lot of plant-based proteins are what they call like incomplete or not having all nine together. But as long as you're getting all nine throughout the day, then it doesn't really matter what time of comes from, as long as they're all in your day. Start with the RDA. That's the recommendation for the dietary allowances, so how much our governing bodies have decided that we should have each day, which is 0.8 grams per kilogram, and for plant-based eaters, so anyone who's not having any animal-based proteins, these two go up to 0.9 grams per kilogram, then that's the baseline.

[00:05:52] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** This episode is brought to you by Orgain. You know that moment when you're searching for something nutritious, but your sweet tooth has other plans? We've all been there. That's why I love Orgain's creamy chocolate fudge, organic plant-based protein, and super foods. It's that something sweet with added benefits. With 21 grams of plant-based protein, nine grams of prebiotic and fiber, and only one gram of sugar, it's a smarter choice for breakfast, a post-workout shake, or even a late night snack. What do



you recommend most frequently as a way to handle challenges of going plant-based?

[00:06:32] **Rhyan Geiger** Some of the biggest challenges are just like the environment in which we grow up. Meat, potatoes, corn, that's our plate every single night for dinner. And that's kind of disengrained with like, okay, the only proteins that exist are meat because that's all I've known as I've been growing up.

[00:06:50] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** Do you think that people need to be cooking at home more then? Or how do you tackle like traveling and stuff?

[00:06:55] **Rhyan Geiger** That was the hardest, like, promoting cooking at home just because you have a better idea of the saturated fat, you have better idea of the sodium, their home cooked meals are going to be lower in both of those if those are concerns. But eating out every once in a while, there's a lot of great vegan options and great vegan restaurants that I think are worth checking out too.

[00:07:17] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** How do you prioritize food sources versus adding in supplements?

[00:07:22] **Rhyan Geiger** I like to do just a dietary recall and using a tool that calculates what the nutrients look like, what the macronutrients look like, what the micronutrients look like, kind of getting an overall view and seeing how close they are to their goals already with the foods they like, and seeing what can be modified or added in to reach those goals. I love using plant-based protein powders. I love using different things like that. For all of the cases, travel, feeling busy, not having time for breakfast, planning, I will say, is the number one thing that I know I struggle with, and a lot of busy professionals also struggle with.

[00:07:58] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** So what would you say are some of the top, we call the micronutrients that you focus on for your vegan folks?

[00:08:05] **Rhyan Geiger** It would be iron, calcium, and then vitamin B12 are typically the top three ones.



[00:08:12] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** What do you do with it?

[00:08:13] **Rhyan Geiger** For iron, just looking at how much you're getting for, plant-based eaters, the RDA is much, much higher. So it's 1.8 times higher than the RDA for people who don't eat meat. But then for calcium too, not using dairy, but tofu set in calcium, great source, fortified plant-based milks, if you're making those protein shakes with the protein powder, you could just add in a fortified plant-based milk, and then you're pretty close. [00:08:44] You know what a dairy serving would look like. [0.0s]

[00:08:46] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** So let's say that somebody wants to work towards being vegan, but is in a transition, what are the first steps that you recommend people take? Like how do people get started in the easiest way?

[00:08:58] **Rhyan Geiger** So they created like a week by week guide. And each day there's like a different task to do to help people get acquainted with new plant-based products, new proteins, new vegetables. So then by the end of like the four months or however many weeks are laid out, I have a great sense of what all of these foods are. I know I liked this recipe. I liked that recipe. I didn't like this ingredient. And so it becomes much easier just to do it. Day by day or week by week and breaking it down. So maybe the first week, you're like, okay, I'm not going to have red meat. And then the next week, you say, okay, I'm going to try plant-based milk that's fortified. And you, like, build on yourself.

[00:09:39] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** People don't like tofu or beans. Do you have a favorite recipe or like tips to make those foods taste good?

[00:09:46] **Rhyan Geiger** My number one tip is look at the type of tofu you're using. And if it's anything less than super firm and you're like, I hate it every time I cook it, try super firm, it has much less water in it. So you don't have to do the pressing and the extra steps that are with it. Because if you don't press firm and get all the water out, there's no room for the flavors to be absorbed into the tofu because it's full of water. So that's my first tip is just try super-firm.

[00:10:12] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** That's an amazing tip.

[00:10:14] **Rhyan Geiger** When you freeze it and then take it out of the freezer, let it thaw a little bit, press it again, it gets a really like more dense texture. So



it's not as spongy. So if you don't like the texture of tofu, just try the freezer method. And I think your mind might be changed because the texture is completely different.

[00:10:33] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** I get this too, people come and they're like, well, avocado is a rich source of protein or I'm getting my protein from broccoli. Like you said, I hear that too. How do you educate on that?

[00:10:42] **Rhyan Geiger** I try to come from everything in a compassionate lens. There is information out there that is very compelling that broccoli does have protein or that mushrooms have protein or that avocado has protein. I've seen the videos myself, and if I didn't know that they didn't, I'd be like, okay, like I'll add that as protein. So kind of just approaching it as compassion and just myth busting. And I like to show like comparisons too with that part that, I mentioned earlier of like these are proteins as how many grams it has, and even just pulling up like serving a broccoli has X amount of grams of protein. If you did want to have that many grams of protein from broccoli, this is how much you would need to eat. So then it kind of showcases the large amount and then the patient's like, I'm not going to be eating that much broccoli ever in one setting. So that's usually how I approach it.

[00:11:31] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** I think you would need like pounds and pounds of broccoli to get where you needed to go. Do you have any final words or advice?

[00:11:40] **Rhyan Geiger** My biggest tip of advice is don't be afraid to try new things. I know new things can sometimes be scary, but there are so many new foods, there are many different types of fruits or vegetables. Find inspiration or find something that's exciting to you, and give it a go for plant-based eating because then once you get that spark of like, this is really fun, I like this, it kind of just continues and builds on itself to become a lovely, fun, fun that we all love sitting around.

[00:12:07] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** Rhyan, this was an incredible conversation. I'm so glad I got to talk to you.



[00:12:12] **Rhyan Geiger** Oh, thanks so much for having me. I love chatting all things plant-based nutrition. I think it's a great topic. We're very aligned on it, and I can't wait to talk to you real soon.

[00:12:21] **Dr. Ginger Hultin** I had such a great time chatting with Rhyan. I can't believe I haven't tried her frozen tofu hack before. My biggest takeaway, creativity is key. Rhyan shared so many great tips for making plant-based eating work for you, your taste, your preferences, and your lifestyle. With a little inspiration and know-how, the transition to plant-base may be less daunting than you think. And speaking of inspiration, this conversation made me want to dig even deeper. In our next episode, Rhyan and I will be diving into the science behind plant-based protein alternatives and where they're headed. Thanks for listening. If you enjoyed today's episode, please leave a review and follow The Good Clean Nutrition podcast on Apple, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts.

Disclaimer: This podcast is for informational purposes only and is not intended to be medical advice. The material presented in this podcast is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

Orgain, LLC is providing these episodes on an "as is" basis and makes no representations or warranties of any kind with respect to the podcast episodes. Orgain, LLC nor any of its directors, employees or other representatives will be liable for damages arising out of or in connection with the use of this document. This is a comprehensive limitation of liability that applies to all damages of any kind, including (without limitation) compensatory, direct, indirect or consequential damages, loss of data, income or profit, loss of or damage to property and claims of third parties.