

Protein



Proteins are essential nutrients made up of long chains of amino acids. They are one of the building blocks of body tissue, and are also a good source of fuel!

If you're trying to be healthier, it's important to keep your protein intake in mind. High-protein foods are, generally speaking, higher in fats and cholesterol than other foods. It's a good idea to eat high-protein foods anyway, though. For one thing, they're filling, meaning they'll curb your hunger through the day. This is good because it'll make it easier to avoid more tempting, less healthy foods. Also, even though you'll be consuming more fat, it'll actually help you lose weight. This is because the consumption of high-protein foods speeds up your metabolism, which burns calories with less effort.





Muscle

High-protein foods are actually ideal if you want to gain weight as well—and by weight, I mean muscle. Like most tissues in the body, muscles are constantly being broken down and rebuilt. To gain muscle, the body needs to be synthesizing more muscle protein than it is breaking down. This means to gain muscle you need to consume protein or else it won't work. It also helps you keep on muscle you've already gained. Sadly though, life isn't like Captain America, and if you want to get fit, you're going to have to do a little more work than just putting the right things into your body. This means, you're going to have to exercise too!

Health Benefits

Other health benefits associated with protein include: better bone density, a lower risk of osteoporosis, better brain function, lower blood pressure, better sleep, and stronger tendons. Also, most of the foods with high levels of protein have high levels of other essential nutrients, like iron, the B vitamins, zinc, and magnesium.



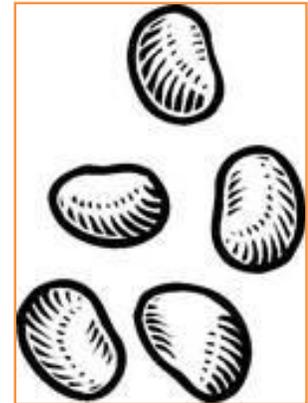


Daily Dosages

The actual amount of protein we should eat per day is difficult to say, because every official health organization has a different opinion. The average range tends to fall close to 56-91 grams/day for males and 46-75 grams/day for females. Or, more accurately, 0.45 grams/pound you weight. As an example, the picture on the left is worth about 20 grams of protein.

Good Sources

There are many foods which provide good sources of protein. Some of the higher-protein foods include: fish, chicken, cheese, pork loin, lean beef, tofu, soy beans, eggs, dairy products, and nuts/seeds



Tips

- You don't always have to get your protein from the main dish. Have some high-protein sides instead! Some examples are: cooked spinach, hummus dip, or beans.
- Get creative! Add nuts and seeds to salads. Add eggs to light soups. Add cheese to... basically anything. Experiment in the kitchen a little.
- Drink lots of milk! Dairy products are great sources of protein.