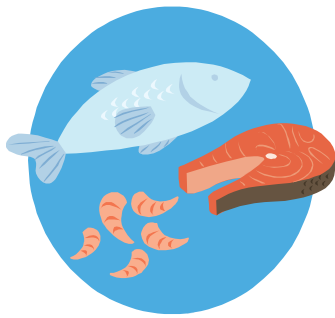


The Importance of Protein



Protein is a “building block” nutrient. It is used in the body to build tissue such as white and red blood cells, other cells in the immune system, skin, hair, and muscle.

As a guide line, the Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) for protein is about 0.4 grams per day for each pound of body weight. For example, a 150 pound person would need 60 grams of protein; however, as no two individuals regardless of age or sex metabolize nutrients the same, protein needs vary.

Often, in my clinic, I find many people to be protein deficient as they live active rather than a sedentary life style.

Men for example generally need a little more protein each day than women as men have more muscle mass.

Disease and disease treatments such as cancer protocols often create more stress on the body thus a person may need more protein.

If about to receive or recovering from surgery, the body is under stress and the body may need extra protein to heal properly.

Simple things such as improper dieting at any age can create a risk for protein loss.

Unlike carbohydrates, protein is not stored in the body. Protein must be continuously replaced as it is used; otherwise, our bodies may draw on muscle mass for the amino acids it needs for important organ function. This is also true when the body is ill.

Overtime, lost muscle leads to weakness such as climbing stairs carrying groceries becomes an effort.

Protein goes hand in hand with calories. If a person is not receiving enough calories to maintain their weight, extra protein will not help very much.

If weight loss occurs during illness or any medical treatment, the body is telling that more protein and more calories are needed.

As we age, calorie needs diminish; protein needs do not; so be careful not to cut protein from diet.

Studies show that if you eat 25 to 30 percent of calories from lean protein in moderate servings – like chicken, fish, low-fat dairy, beans, and soy – it can help the body retain lean tissue while losing weight.

As with all things, too much protein can be a negative as well. Some diseases and conditions such as kidney disease, kidney failure, or liver disease can make it harder for the body to process and use protein. On the other hand, normal kidney function can metabolize extra protein.

Typical Sources of Protein

- Meat, poultry and fish: = 7 grams per ounce
- Beans, dried peas, lentils: = 7 grams per ½ cup cooked
- One large egg: = 7 grams
- Milk: = 8 grams per cup
- Bread: = 4 grams per slice
- Cereal: 4 grams per ½ cup
- Vegetables: = 2 grams per ½ cup

How much protein a person requires is specific to each individual as the body will convey its need in various forms. In my clinic, I assess protein needs and make recommendations accordingly.